



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 83.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S HARD NIGHT'S WORK

OR
CAPTAIN COOLHAND'S KIDNAPPING PLOT



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

"HANDS UP, NICK ROSS!" SAID BUFFALO BILL, STERNLY. "I WANT YOU! CROOK A FINGER, AND I'LL SEND A BULLET THROUGH YOUR HEART!"



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OR,

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE SCOUT-DETECTIVE.

"Is this a bluff, Buffalo Bill?"

"No, sir. I am in deadly earnest."

"I cannot believe you."

"I stake my life upon the result."

"Let me understand fully, for, as well as I know you, as thoroughly as I trust you, and believe in your power to do that which the bravest men shrink from, I can but look upon what you now say as bluffing."

"Again I repeat, sir, that I mean just what I say."

The speakers were Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts, who at that time was attached to no particular fort, but was going from place to place on the border in search of outlaws and Indians, and Loyd Winter, the superintendent of a part of the Overland stagecoach line.

"With a full knowledge of the situation?" asked Winter.

"Yes, sir; just that."

"You will undertake to find out who the spies are

that are in the Overland Company's service, track down the outlaws who act upon the information their spies give them, ferret out in fort, camps and stations the true men from the false, clear the trail of the danger we now have to face almost daily?"

"I will do all that, sir."

"And on what terms, Buffalo Bill?"

"I have certain terms to make, sir, in that I am to be trusted wholly, have full sway in camp and on trail, and my orders are to be obeyed without question."

"Agreed!"

"But, what are your terms in the way of payment, if you accomplish what you pledge yourself to do?"

"I am a government officer, sir, and as such draw my pay."

"You surely do not intend to work for nothing, when your life any moment may be the forfeit?"

"I accept only my army pay as scout, sir; but if circumstances, to carry out certain ends, cause me to make a demand upon you for funds, I shall do so."

"And you shall promptly be supplied; but, in sending to headquarters to request that you be detailed to me to go on this special duty, the Overland Company expected to pay you handsomely."

"No, sir; I accept no money outside of my legitimate pay."

"The general asked me if I would volunteer for the work which you had written to him about, and as it came within my line of duty I did so volunteer, and I now report to you, sir."

"And boldly assert that you can do what I ask?"

"If I live, sir."

"And it is not a bluff?"

"My game will be one of bluff, sir, in many ways, but I mean what I say to you; the bluff is for those I am to hunt down."

"Then command me at your will, Cody. Anything, everything is yours that I can give. When are you ready for work?"

"Now, sir. That is what I am here for."

"Good! I have just had a letter from California, telling me that a gentleman who struck it rich out there, in mining, as well as marrying the daughter of a wealthy Mexican rancher, is coming overland in a coach he chartered, and bringing with him his only child, a daughter, two servants and a large amount of treasure."

"He is foolish to risk it. Why does he not go by sea?"

"The letter says that he went by sea to California, and was so dreadfully seasick he would not go that way again for his fortune; so we furnish him his coach, horses and driver, and he pays big money for the accommodations. He thinks that by following an hour or two behind the regular coaches on their runs he can avoid being held up on the trail, for no notice is to be given ahead of his coming."

"Perhaps he can get through, sir, and we shall have to do our best to aid him, for on that all may depend."

"Let me know again, please, just how many there are?"

"The ranchero, whose name is Lee Insley; his daughter, whose name I do not know, but I believe she is a young lady grown; two servants, along with their baggage and, the letter says, a very large sum in money."

"And, keeping to the same coach, you are to furnish them with horses and drivers, right through?"

"Yes, and riding horses, too, when they care to take to the saddle for a rest between stations."

"And now, sir, you have an idea that among the people you employ are to be found spies in league with the road agents who hold up the coaches and thus give them notice when there is anything of value to go through?"

"I am sure of it, Buffalo Bill."

"No one knows that this California ranchero and his daughter are to go through?"

"You are the only person I have told, and it is to be kept secret at the other end of the line, the driver ahead only reporting their coming in time to prepare for them, for they want and must have the best."

"Then let me ask you, sir, to put that letter under lock and key at once, and we will see if any one gets the news."

"I will do so, and speak of it to no one."

"I will begin duty at once, sir, and whatever I do here, or where I may go, or what I appear to be, just understand that I am playing my cards to win this game I have entered upon—a game of bluff, may be, but to be played to scoop the jack pot."

"Shall this be our compact, Mr. Winter?"

"Yes, Cody; a compact of honor, duty and partnership, in which I leave all to you."

"Then the compact is signed, sealed and registered. I am ready for duty, sir, at once," was the reply of the scout-detective, for such had Buffalo Bill become in entering upon the service he had set out to perform.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNSEEN FOE.

Several hours after this interview and compact with Loyd Winter, the superintendent of the most deadly and dangerous part of the Overland trail over which the coaches of the company had to pass, Buffalo Bill was riding quietly along a rugged mountain path, apparently wholly indifferent to his surroundings, but in reality keenly on the alert for anything that might transpire.

He well comprehended that he was on a most dangerous part of the trail between Outfit City, the headquarters camp of the Overland Company, and Death-Trap, Canyon, the latter having long been a dead line against the further advance of civilization into the then unknown land.

The nature of the country after leaving Outfit City

was such that it afforded the best of hiding places for outlaws, renegades and hostiles, and many a driver had been killed, who attempted to run the gantlet of the road agents, and his coach robbed of all he carried of value.

It took men of iron nerve to drive these coaches, and of late affairs had been becoming so that large prices were paid to the man who dared handle the reins over a trail dangerous in itself to drive, without the added fear of being held up by road agents or greeted with a shot from some lurking redskin.

But Buffalo Bill rode serenely along, making his first reconnoissance over the trail he had undertaken to clear of human pests.

He had been given a map of the trail for nearly a hundred miles on each side of Outfit City, and the places of the robberies of the coaches and killing of drivers and passengers had been marked, and was anxious to take all in so as to thoroughly know his ground and surroundings.

He had ridden perhaps a dozen miles away from Outfit City, and was nearing a place which had been particularly fatal to the Overland Company, so he was on the alert, though not appearing to be suspicious or apprehensive of danger, for lone travelers were often halted as well as the coaches.

"Halt!" was the greeting that welcomed him.

"A dozen guns have you covered, Buffalo Bill!"

The command was in a tone that admitted of no misunderstanding, and Buffalo Bill drew rein, remarking in a drawling way:

"I guess I'd better obey, then, pard."

He did not appear surprised; he simply accepted the situation as a matter of course, and with the uttered acquiescence awaited the result.

"Where are you going, Buffalo Bill?"

"You know me, I see?"

"Yes, better than you think I do.

"But, answer my question."

"I am returning to Fort Faraway."

"Where have you been?"

"To Outfit City."

"What for?"

"To carry dispatches that had to go through, so I made sure of taking them beyond where you might get them."

"What were these dispatches?"

"I am not in command of this department."

"But you know."

"If I did I would not tell you."

"Do you not know that they were asking for escorts to be allowed for the coaches over this mountain run?"

"No, for you outlaws don't scare anybody very bad as yet."

"Don't we?"

"No."

"No man will drive or ride this trail without big pay."

"I draw only my regular pay."

"You are an exception; but you are no driver or pony rider."

"I am a scout."

"Well, as you have not been very hard on us, we don't bother you; but I want information now."

"I ask no favors of you or your cutthroat gang," said the scout, hotly.

"It may come to asking but receiving none, if you ever turn your hand against the Mounted Sports of the Overland."

"See here, I have heard of you as a bad lot, but it has never been my duty to be sent on your trail; if I am sent some day, I'll not be scared off by threats, you can go high on that!"

"That is just it, Buffalo Bill. I believe you have been sent to Outfit City now to help Loyd Winter corral us; but it won't go; we are on the romp and not to be corralled by one or fifty Overland ropers-in."

Buffalo Bill laughed lightly, and replied:

"I am an army scout, not a clearer of gallows birds.

"Come, state your business, for I wish to be on my way?"

"It is to give you a warning, that if ever you take the trail against, or raise hand against the Mounted Sports of the Overland, your days are numbered."

"Thanks! Are you Captain Coolhand, the head imp of the Mounted Sports?"

"I am."

"Well, you are afraid to show your face; you dare not let me see you, or your gang; you talk to me from ambush; is that a true sport's style?"

"That is all right, in this case. We wish you no harm; but I repeat, Buffalo Bill, if you take our trail, then it means certain death to you.

"I suspect you of intending war against us, and so give you fair warning, for the first hostile act against us by you sounds your death knell.

"The Mounted Sports are in the saddle for big stakes, and they are on this trail to stay until their for-

tune is made, so do not raise hand against us if you value your life.

"Now go on your way!"

Twice did Buffalo Bill call to his unseen foe, but got no response, and so rode on his way once more.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLACK HORSEMAN.

Buffalo Bill rode on his way considerably impressed with his interview with his unseen foe.

There seemed something uncanny to him in the fact that he had been under the muzzles of deadly weapons, warned of death by the very men he had formed a compact with Loyd Winter to run down, and yet had not seen one of them.

Why had they shown him mercy, when merciless to others?

He frequently was known to carry large sums of money between the fort and the Overland stations, and yet no attempt had been made to rob him.

He had had no demand made upon him for gold.

A very shrewd guess, if guess it was, had been made as the reason for his going to Outfit City, and it showed him that he must be on his guard against his business being discovered.

The outlaw leader had simply warned him not to take the trail of the Mounted Sports, or his death would follow.

This had been all, and then he had been allowed to go on his way unmolested.

This the scout could not account for.

Riding quietly along, he began to muse to himself, and it was evident that he was troubled by what had occurred.

Being fired upon he could have understood, but the treatment he had met with surprised him very much.

"There may have been a dozen rifles covering me, as he said, but I doubt it.

"To my mind, there was but one, and yet I dared not take the risk of trying to make him show his hand, for he might have had others near.

"There certainly was a good hiding place for a hundred men there, and on my way back I will have a look at that spot and see what trails were left.

"That man's voice I have got down fine, and will know it when I hear it again, if it was not disguised to-day, and I do not think it was.

"He said he was Captain Coolhand, the leader of the Mounted Sports, and maybe he was.

"Mr. Winter thinks the gang numbers about forty, some say even more, but no smart man would divide spoils with so many when he could do better work with half that number, yes, even with less, for they don't openly fight; they kill from ambush, rob and run.

"Knowing the whole country as they do, they readily get away and safely seek their hiding places.

"I admit that it did seem bluffing in me to tell Winter I would hunt down this band of cutthroats, and without aid, too; but it can be done, and I'm on the trail to stay, whether I play the open hand of Buffalo Bill or the secret one of some one else.

"Now, I am coming to where there is another place marked upon the map Winter gave me, as a favorite spot for hold-ups by the Sports—ah! who have we there?"

Musing on he rode along. Buffalo Bill had kept his eyes well ahead on the trail, and his remark had been caused by suddenly seeing a horseman ahead of him.

"Why, he must think I'm a road agent, for his hands are held above his head at mere sight of me," muttered the scout, and as he drew nearer to the horseman his eyes became fixed upon him with a look of strange interest.

The man who barred the way, though certainly with no hostile intention, as he held his hands up as though in token of surrender, was either a black man or wore a black mask.

He rode a jet-black horse, and there was no glimmer of brass or silver on saddle or bridle.

He was dressed in black, from foot to sable sombrero, and his appearance was certainly most sombre.

"His face is not masked, nor is it blacked—he's a *bona fide* negro," muttered the scout as he drew nearer.

He saw that the man possessed a fine physique, that he was well mounted and armed, and yet there he sat on his horse in token of abject surrender before the scout got within pistol range of him.

"Some deserter from a colored regiment, who is lost and anxious to go back and take his punishment, after what he has experienced since he left his fort," decided Buffalo Bill, and he rode on at a quicker pace, yet wholly on his guard, for he did not know but that there might be some plan to entrap him, in the man's show of surrender.

He felt that he might have comrades near, and, hav-

ing just passed through a strange experience with outlaws, the scout did not care to be caught napping again.

As he drew near he fixed his eyes upon the face of the Black Horseman, who, he perceived, was a negro, pure and simple, and after a moment he muttered:

"I know him, now!"

"It is Darkie Dick, the black burglar.

"This is indeed a valuable find!"

CHAPTER IV.

DARKIE DICK, THE BLACK BURGLAR.

"Hello, Darkie Dick, you here on the frontier yet?" called out Buffalo Bill, as he drew near to the negro horseman.

"Yes, Massa Bufferler Bill, I hain't gone yet.

"I is still here," was the answer, and in a very melancholy tone.

"And are willing to go back with me to the fort, and give up your stolen goods, I take it?"

"Massa Bill, I hain't stole nothin', and I hain't willin' ter go back to ther fort, nuther."

"Why are you here in my trail, then?"

"Kin I let down my hands, sah, 'cause they gits tired holdin' of 'em up?"

"Yes, for nobody told you to hold them up; but had you not done so, and I had caught sight of you, I'd have sent a bullet after you.

"But mind you! no monkey business with me, for you know I can use a revolver quickly and with deadly aim."

"Lordy, Massa Bill, I would hurt my old grandma afore I would you, for I ain't forgot how you saved me from ther redskins, sah.

"No, sah; I trusts myself now in yer power ter have a talk wid yer, and I seen yer comin', so waited fer yer."

"Well, what is it, Darkie Dick? Time is precious, you must know."

"I knows dat, sah, and so am dis nigger's life.

"I tell yer, sah, I hab had a tough time since I done left de fort."

"You have only yourself to blame for it, for you proved a thief to those who trusted you, broke into the homes of the officers and robbed your best friends, while, worse still, you killed the sentinel on guard in making your escape."

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!"

"Massa Bill, I didn't kill no man, sah; 'fore de Lord, I did not, sah!"

"The man was killed, and you were gone with all the booty you could rob the camp of, though how you escaped the force sent after you I cannot tell.

"But it is my duty, now, to take you back to the fort, and the chances are, Darkie Dick, that you will hang for your crimes."

"Massa Bufferler Bill, hear me talk, sah!" and the negro spoke with impressive earnestness.

"Well, what have you to say?"

"I didn't put myself in your power to be taken back to de fort, sah, but for another purpose.

"I hain't no born fool, if I is black, and I tells you, sah, dat no man on earth does I regard more higher dan I does yer; but I'd fight it right out now wid yer, if you war ter say I hed ter go wid yer back to de fort."

"You've got good nerve, at least."

"I is in dead 'arnest, sah, and I tells you de truf.

"I hain't rob nobody, altho' dey says so, and I hed ter git out ter save myself, dat's what!"

"You tells me dat I kilt de guard, sah, but I did not do it, and I didn't know no life was taken until you jist told me.

"I left de fort, yas, sah; and left a name behin' me dat is blacker dan my face, and all is ag'in me, Massa Bill; but I tell yer, sah, dat I hed a purpose I can't tell yer in goin'—at least not now—but I hopes ter, some day, and I wants you ter trust me, sah, not ter believe all dey says I is, and I don't blame 'em fer it. I wants yer to jist let me work in my own way and show yer, in de Lord's good time, dat ef I has a black skin I hain't got no black heart."

Buffalo Bill's eyes were riveted upon the negro as he proclaimed his innocence.

He had always liked the man, as did all at the fort, and it was a great shock to one and all to find him missing one morning, the sentinel dying upon his post, yet able to say that Darkie Dick had killed him, and then have the discovery made that the quarters of the officers had been robbed, the paymaster's safe opened, and numerous strong boxes skillfully burglarized and a large amount of money and valuables taken.

The whole garrison was turned out to pursue the negro murderer and burglar, and Buffalo Bill and his whole company of scouts were for days on the trail, but all in vain; Darkie Dick, the colonel's trusted body servant, could not be found, and here, six months after,

the scout met him waiting for him in the stage trail, and with hands up in token of apparent surrender!

But, in looking into the face of the negro, Buffalo Bill saw there that which caused him for the first time to believe that, in spite of the circumstantial evidence of his guilt, he might, after all, be innocent.

So feeling, the scout said:

"Well, Darkie Dick, I supposed you were by this time in a foreign land, enjoying the fruits of you burglaries, and I never recognized you until close upon you.

"Then I very naturally supposed your conscience had driven you to surrender and take the consequences of your crimes; but you tell me that you would fight to the death rather than surrender, that you are no burglar and murderer, and left the fort for a purpose, while you have trusted yourself in my power for some reason you have not yet explained.

"Now, what is it you wish, for if I did not have a belief that, after all, you might be innocent, I would arrest you, or have it out with you right here, for I know well your great strength, your unerring aim and undoubted pluck.

"Come, now, tell me what you have to say."

"Massa Bill, de Lord bress you for dem words dot says you believe I may be innercent, sah, and I tells yer now, I intends ter prove it, on'y yer must let me work in my own way.

"Now, I can't tell yer what I is doin', why I left de fort, and no more dan dat I seen yer go ter Outfit City dis mornin' arly, and I jist waited for yer comin' back, fer I has something ter tell you, sah, so I has," and again Darkie Dick spoke impressively.

CHAPTER V.

A DOUBLE MYSTERY.

"I am waiting to hear what you have to say, Darkie Dick, and I tell you frankly, I do not like your having placed yourself in my power, trusting to my honor, for it is my duty to arrest you," and Buffalo Bill spoke in a tone that showed the black horseman that he meant just what he said.

"I see dat you don't believe me, Massa Bill, dat you t'inks I is de bad nigger dey calls me," said Darkie Dick, reproachfully.

"What else am I to think, for I have only your word against facts that point to your guilt.

"I find you here now, armed to the teeth, splendidly

mounted, on the Overland trail, and appearances are terribly against you."

"Dey is, sah, dey is; dat's gospil trufe; but, as I tole you, I seen yer goin' to Outfit City, an' I jist laid fer yer return.

"Massa Bill, I don't want yer ter ax me no questions, kase I hain't gwine ter answer none of 'em, but I wants ter tell you dat dere am a Californy gent, an' his darter, wid a coach full o' money, and two sarvents a-comin' over de Overland trail on dair way East, and dey is ter be held up and robbed; de young leddy is ter be tuk prisoner until her pa pays a big lot o' gold ter let her go. I tells yer dis dat you may sabe 'em from it all, for I knows you kin do it."

"How did you learn this, Darkie Dick?"

"I hain't talkin', sah."

"You refuse to tell?"

"Yes, sah."

"But you know these people are coming?"

"Yes, sah."

"When?"

"Dey is expected along in de next three days, sah, maybe is now not far away."

"And the Mounted Sports of the Overland know of their coming?"

"Dey does, sah."

"Then I am to look upon you as one of the outlaw band of Mounted Sports?"

"I hain't sayin' what I is, Massa Bill, but yer kin jist believe I is tellin' der trufe, sah, when I says ef yer don't sabe dat gemman an' his darter, yer'll feel sorry for it."

"I will try, but how am I to go about it?"

"I hain't givin' you no advice, Massa Bill, fer you knows. I only tells you dey is comin', dat dey is ter be robbed, maybe somebody will get kilt, and you knows what ter do, fer a escort along wid 'em would save 'em."

"How many outlaws are in the band?"

"Massa Bill, you is keen as a briar ter cotch dis nigger, but I ain't bitin' at no bait."

"Do you know I was halted back on the trail a few miles?"

"No, sah," and the negro started.

"Well, I was, and by the Mounted Sports."

"Did you see 'em, sah?"

"No."

"Dey didn't pull no gun on you?"

"They had me covered."

"Don't git scared, sah, for de Mounted Sports hain't goin' ter kill you, Massa Bill."

"Why not?"

"Well, sah, I ain't replyin' to no questions, but dey is not, though dey will try and make you believe dey is dead onto you.

"Dey does b'lieve dat you is layin' fer 'em now, and will do all dey kin ter scare you off, but den you ain't one of de kind ter skeer bad.

"Yer say dey held yer up, sah, back on de trail?"

"Yes."

"Does yer mind tellin' me what was said?"

Buffalo Bill told all, just as it had occurred. The negro listened attentively, and seemed to be very uneasy, glancing up the trail anxiously.

At last he said: "I gotter go, Massa Bill, buth I'll be round when you don't know whar I is, and you knows I is your friend, and I gwine ter make you mine when I kin.

"I tanks yer, sah, fer not tryin' ter take dis nigger pris'ner, fer it would only be you die, or me, and some day I tell yer what I ain't able ter do now.

"Good-by, Massa Bill, and don't fergit ter sabe dat poor young leddy and her pa."

The black horseman politely raised his hat as he spoke, and was turning away, when Buffalo Bill called out:

"See here, Darkie Dick."

"Yes, sah."

"Your trust in me prevents a death struggle between us now. I let you go; but, remember, if you are playing any game on me, there will come a day of reckoning between us, mark my words, for I'll track you to your end."

"I hain't goin' ter fergit, Massa Bill," and the negro rode quickly away out of the trail, as if anxious to get under cover.

Buffalo Bill watched him disappear from sight, and then muttered:

"Now, have I done right to let him go? I hope so. At any rate, I shall find him again, now that I know he has not fled from the country.

"Is he innocent or guilty of the robberies at the fort, and of the murder of the guard?

"There is some mystery in it all, and it is but increased by his trusting me as he did, and the knowledge he has of the coming of the Californian, which Loyd Winter thought had been kept so secret.

"I will go back to where I was held up, and take the

trail there, and return to-night to Outfit City to tell Winter that his secret is known.

"Then I must go ahead on the trail and meet the Californian, guiding him around all danger from the Mounted Sports."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCOUT SURPRISED.

Having decided upon his course, Buffalo Bill rode back over the trail toward Outfit City, going in-a canter.

With it known to the Mounted Sports that the Californian was coming along the Overland, the scout felt that he must make known to Loyd Winter that the secret was in the possession of the very ones from whom they had wished to keep it.

He, Buffalo Bill, must know just when the Californians were expected, that he might head them off, and guide them by a long trail around the ambush of the outlaws.

His meeting with the negro, Darkie Dick, had been a strange one, and yet the more he thought it over the more he felt that the fugitive colored man might not be guilty, as every one at Fort Faraway believed him.

"I wish I had time to take his trail," he said, as he rode along.

"But that will follow later, after I have saved the Californian from the outlaws, and when I settle down to the business of ferreting out the spies the Mounted Sports have in the Overland Company's service, for by such means alone the secrets become known of when gold is to be sent through, and when there are rich passengers to rob.

"Now, this secret of the coming of the Californian is known to the outlaws very soon after Winter himself gets the news, which but proves that some spy is very close to him, or else the party is being shadowed along the trail.

"The Mounted Sports certainly have it down fine, the way they are working things to commit crime; but then they can be downed, as other bands of crooks have been.

"Now, for a look at this spot where I was held up, and see just how many outlaws there were."

Halting, Buffalo Bill dismounted and hitched his horse, and on foot began the search.

He had not been long at his work before a puzzled expression came over his face.

He had evidently made a discovery that surprised him.

After a good half hour of searching thoroughly among the rocks and timber, he said:

"Well, I was either held up by one man, or all the others he claimed to have must have been on foot, for I can find only the trail of one horse."

"Next time I shall make them show their hand."

"If that was Captain Coolhand, and he was alone, then he is indeed a cool hand at his work, and no play intended on his name, either."

"I wish I had fired at chance, for sometimes I have hit dead center on a guess, and I'll spot him from the sound of his voice."

"I am getting mystified and no mistake, but the more mystery there is the more interest I take in my work."

"Now for a rapid gallop to Outfit City. Ah! I hear the coach coming, and——"

Buffalo Bill halted suddenly, for he had heard the rumbling of wheels around a bend in the trail, and he knew that it was the coach from Outfit City to Death-Trap Canyon.

The driver seemed to be pushing his horses along at a good pace, too, from the sound of rapidly moving hoofs and wheels.

But the sound had ceased suddenly, as though the coach had been brought to a quick halt, and there came to the ears of the scout the sharp tones of a voice in command, though the words he did not catch.

"Held up, by Jove! I'll chip in there, though the odds are doubtless big against me."

As he spoke, Buffalo Bill settled himself well in his saddle, drew a revolver in each hand, and set his horse going in a run, while loud, clear, and commanding his voice was raised, shouting to imaginary comrades: "Ho, pards, they have held up the coach! Now at them!"

A hundred yards or more he sped over, the bend was swept around at full speed, and some distance ahead on the trail he beheld the coach at a halt.

Upon the box sat the driver, Left-Hand Larry, who waved his hat around his head as he shouted:

"Hooray! Buffalo Bill and his scouts!"

"We is all right now, pilgrims, when Buffalo Bill chips in."

The last words were addressed to one or more persons in the coach, as the driver leaned far over and looked down into the open door.

Another moment and Buffalo Bill dashed up and called out:

"Ho, Larry, in the hands of the Philistines, eh? But where are they?"

"I was corralled, Buffalo Bill, but your coming scared off the niggers."

"Negroes?" asked the scout in surprise.

"Well; maybe I should hev said nigger, fer I seen but one, though I has an idee others was around, and he lied if ther wasn't, fer he said he had men ter back him."

"How was he dressed and mounted?"

"He was ridin' a black horse, and he was dressed like a undertaker, all in black."

"Darkie Dick, the fugitive negro," muttered Buffalo Bill in a low tone not meant for the driver's ears.

CHAPTER VII.

LARRY'S THREE PASSENGERS.

"What did yer say, Buffalo Bill?" asked Left-Hand Larry, the driver, and so called from the fact that he always used his revolver with his left hand, and his whip as well.

He was a frank-faced, fearless-looking fellow, and was well known as a splendid driver, and one who would take chances when other men would back down.

"You say that the road agent was a negro?" and Buffalo Bill answered Larry's question by asking one.

"He was, ef looks goes fer anyting, a great big black nigger, dressed in black, and ther only white about him was the whites of his eyes?"

"And the others?"

"Didn't see no more—he were enough."

"But you heard them ride away as I came up?"

"No I didn't, and guess he were alone."

"He were ag'in' that black rock thar, and I didn't see him until he called out fer me ter halt."

"I saw he had me covered, and I put the brake on quick."

"Then I seen that what I took fer a black mask were black skin, and he rode toward ther coach callin' out that he was out fer gold and would get it ef he had ter kill."

"My pilgrims inside groaned, and were that scared they begun ter rob themselves ter hand out ther dust, but just ther we heerd the music o' yer notes, and ther nig he jist backed out o' sight behind ther rock, keepin' "

me covered with his gun, and he went tearin' away as though tther devil had sent fer him.

"I tell yer, Pard Bill, it's gittin' ter be strange times on ther Overland when niggers is tarnin' road agents, and I is lookin' for a Chinees ter hold me up next time."

Buffalo Bill laughed, but asked:

"Who have you along, Larry?"

"Two gents and a man as may be one, but don't look it, though appearances is deceivin', as yer knows."

Buffalo Bill rode up to the side of the coach and glanced in, with the remark:

"Good-evening, gentlemen!"

Two of them replied politely, and their appearance indicated that they were not men of the border.

They were dressed in corduroy hunting costume, and had the look of young men out on their first wild West journey.

The third man was a different looking individual, for his clothes, boots and hat were new, and he had the look, to an experienced eye, of a plainsman trying to play tenderfoot.

His face was darkly bronzed, save where his beard had lately been shaved off, as though for disguise, and his hands were large, rough, and those of a working-man.

"We have to thank you, sir, for saving our money, and we carry a large sum, I may say—if not for saving our lives," said one of the young men.

"We are going out to Fort Faraway to visit friends for a couple of months, to have a hunt for big game, and we have valuable luggage along, which you have saved for us, and we hope you will allow us to reward you, sir," explained the other.

"Thank you, sir, but I accept no reward for doing my duty. I am chief of scouts at Fort Faraway, and have heard of your coming, for your friends have been expecting you for weeks, if you are Messrs. Sprague and Sanford."

"Yes, I am Burt Sprague and this is my friend, Maury Sanford. Your name we have not heard."

"Then yer was thet bad scared thet yer didn't catch it, pards, fer I told yer we was all right, as Buffalo Bill were on hand," cried Left-Hand Larry.

"Buffalo Bill!"

The name broke from the lips of the young men together, while Larry answered:

"Yas, Buffalo Bill, called at his christenin' William F. Cody, and ther whitest-hearted man in this country."

"He are ther best scout, Indian fighter, and all-round good feller——"

"Hold on, Larry, or these gentlemen will think you are in my pay to sound my praises!" cried Buffalo Bill, fairly blushing at the words of the driver.

"Well, I know yer," was the answer.

"And so do we, sir, for we have heard and read much of Buffalo Bill, and I assure you we are glad to have been rescued by one so distinguished."

"In our visit out here business is combined with pleasure; consequently we brought along with us considerable money, more than we cared to lose; so we owe much to you, as does also this gentleman, who told us he had a small fortune on him."

Buffalo Bill's eyes turned upon the third passenger, who seemed to be trying to shrink back out of sight from the moment the scout had ridden up.

In the thanks extended to Buffalo Bill for driving off the black horseman he had uttered no word; but now, when appealed to by Burt Sprague, he seemed to withdraw still further back, while he muttered:

"Yes. I have a very large sum with me—going to invest in the mines, you know. I thank you, sir, for saving it; indeed I do!"

Then, to the surprise of all, Buffalo Bill quickly covered the man with his revolver and said, sternly:

"Hands up, Nick Ross!"

"I want you—hold! Crook a finger and I'll send a bullet through your heart!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A COUNTER CHARGE.

Left-Hand Larry was as much surprised at the sudden and threatening action of Buffalo Bill toward his third passenger as were the two young men who were on the way to the fort.

But the driver knew enough of the scout to feel that he was not one to act without good reason, and instantly stood ready to back him up in this bold act, for he called out:

"If he's a bad one, Pard Bill, I'm with yer!"

"Is this the way you protect your passengers, sir? I shall report you to the superintendent, for I am a detective in his employ," called out the man who was covered by the scout's revolver.

"If you are, then Mr. Winter has got hold of a bad man for a detective, and does not know you as I do," retorted Buffalo Bill.

"Who are you?"

"A detective should know when he heard me called Buffalo Bill."

"Driver, I appeal to you for protection against this highwayman."

"You is away off ther trail, pard, for that don't go down. I knows Buffalo Bill and don't know you, and that's a big difference. I chips in with William every time."

"Larry, do you remember the post trader, Nick Ross, who was found out to be a road agent a year ago, and just escaped hanging by killing one of my scouts, whom I sent as his guard to the fort?"

"I does, and there's money up on him."

"Yes, a thousand dollars for his capture, dead or alive."

"I don't care for the reward, as I never take blood money, but I've got the man, and will take all responsibility of making any mistake."

"Slip these handcuffs on him, while I keep him covered, and then search him, Larry."

"I'll do it, William; bet your moccasins!"

"I appeal to you, gentlemen, for protection against this outrage," called out the man to his fellow-passengers.

"Pardon me, but as this gentleman is a government officer, he doubtless knows what his duty is," replied Mr. Sprague, while his friend said:

"Yes, we are sorry for you, but if innocent you have your redress."

"Gentlemen, as I said, I am responsible for my actions. I know this man in spite of the great change he has made in his personal appearance, to be the man I accuse him of being—Nick Ross, a one-time trader, who was recently an outlaw."

"There, Larry, bundle these things up and carry them with the prisoner to the fort, telling Colonel Duncan that I send him in, and accuse him of being Nick Ross, the renegade trader."

"I'll do it, Pard Bill."

"He told us that he had thousands of dollars with him, sir, and seemed most particular to learn just what we had, I recall now," observed Maury Sanford.

"His thousands do not appear to materialize, however, for that is all he had," and Buffalo Bill pointed to the small roll of bills and a little silver money the man had with him, for nothing else save his weapons had been found upon him by Larry's close search.

Having firmly secured his prisoner, Buffalo Bill

turned him over to the driver, bade the two young hunters a polite good-evening, and, mounting his horse, said:

"Keep a bright lookout, Larry, as you may be halted again, for I happen to know that there are more outlaws abroad than the negro who held you up."

"I say, Pard Bill," called out Larry, as Buffalo Bill was about to ride away.

"Well, Larry?"

"What you say kinder scares me off, for I has got a pretty big sum of money along with me."

"I am sorry, for I fear you will be held up."

"Whar is you bound now?"

"To Outfit City."

"Couldn't guard us to the fort?"

"I would, Larry, but I have a very important duty on hand just now; but I'll send several men after you from Outfit City."

"It would be too late, for if I am held up again it will be within the next thirty miles, so I say fer you to take the boodle back to Outfit City and turn it over ter ther boss ter keep until its safer ter send it through."

"So I will do if you wish, Larry."

"And you will assume the responsibility of our money and valuables also, sir?" asked Burt Sprague.

"If you wish, but I am one man only, and may also be held up and robbed."

"But the chances are in your favor rather than ours."

"Yes, for it is but ten miles to Outfit City."

"Then we will turn over to you all we have, to be sent through when you think it safe."

"Hold on, all of you! and heed or not, as you please," said the prisoner, earnestly.

"Well, what has you ter say?" asked Larry.

"I assert that this man is not Buffalo Bill, the scout, whom I know well."

"Remember, he accuses me of being an outlaw, and Nick Ross, the one-time trader; but I tell you that I am a detective in the employ of the Overland Company and was sent along to guard the treasure the coach carries, and the money you two gentlemen were known to have with you."

"That man looks very much like William Cody, strikingly so, I admit, but he is the outlaw, Shadow Bill, of whom you have heard often, driver, and this is but a clever game of his to deceive you all and get the booty, so don't trust your money to him, I beg of you, for you'll find it as I have said, and that I also am what I represent myself to be."

CHAPTER IX.

A BARRIER IN THE TRAIL.

Even Left-Hand Larry looked at the scout with suspicious gaze at this counter charge of the man accused of being Nick Ross.

The charge seemed so plausible that the two young men were impressed by it.

The man saw his advantage at once, and added, quickly:

"See here, driver, cover that man and take him also a prisoner into the fort, for I will take my chances of proving that I am an Overland detective and that this is Shadow Bill, the outlaw, who is so like Buffalo Bill, the scout, he has often been called his double.

"Well, pard, what has you to say now?" asked Larry, fingering his revolver nervously, and turning upon the scout who had heard the counter charge against him in silence, merely smiling.

"If you believe the man, Left-Hand Larry, you and your passengers had better not trust your money to my keeping," he said, quietly.

"That's so; but about taking you along, too, and having you show your hand."

"See here, driver, I have work to do, and will not stand any nonsense on the charge of that outlaw.

"I know of this Shadow Bill. He has more than once played some game of deviltry and put it on me; but you should know who I am and what I am."

"Of course, as strangers, knowing neither man, we cannot judge; but I'll stake my money upon my knowledge of human nature, and say this gentleman is the one he represents himself to be," Burt Sprague asserted, and promptly his friend said:

"As will I."

"Pards, I'm with you, too, for, though I had heard much o' that Shadow Bill, I'll chance this bein' ther real article, all wool and a yard wide Buffalo Bill from Wayback," added Larry.

The prisoner scowled at this, and said, sternly:

"You will regret your decision, for I'll stake my neck that I am right."

"Your neck belongs to the law, as it is, and is already forfeited by your crimes, Nick Ross," said Buffalo Bill, and all saw that the words went home; but the man replied:

"And you'll hang before I do, when Buffalo Bill knows you are robbing coaches under his name."

This shot also told, but in favor of the prisoner.

But Buffalo Bill, making no reply, asked calmly:

"What is your will, Larry, about your money?"

"Take it, Pard Bill, and if yer does turn out to be Shadder Bill, then I gives up driving and goes on the warpath fer scalp."

"And we will go with you; but I have no doubt as to this being the man of whom we have heard so much, for if he is what the prisoner accuses him of being, then his face belies him."

"Thank you, Mr. Sprague, for your good opinion.

"I must be off now, for within one hour it will be night, and I wish to reach Outfit City soon after dark."

"Here is my money and my valuables also, sir, for you to care for," and Burt Sprague handed over the large sum he had with him, and a buckskin bag containing jewelry.

"And mine, too," and Maury Sanford also gave his possessions to the scout.

"Here goes fer a big wad of government boodle, and if you be Shadder Bill, and not Buffalo Bill, then yer has got enough ter retire from ther road agent biz," said Left-Hand Larry, and his face showed that he was not wholly assured in his mind as to the identity of the scout.

"Yes, there goes a small fortune into the hands of an outlaw who has played you for fools and won his game.

"But I warned you, please remember," said the prisoner.

For a moment it seemed as though the words would cause Left-Hand Larry to recall the money he had intrusted to the scout, but he saw that the two young men meant to stand by their decision and he determined to do so, too, while Buffalo Bill remarked, with something of a sneer hovering about his mouth:

"I never quarrel with a man with a rope about his neck."

The prisoner winced, the scout raised his broad sombrero, and rode silently away, the others looking after him without a word.

At last the prisoner said:

"There goes your money, gentlemen; but I could do no more than I did to save it for you."

"If you is right, pard, I trusts no man in the future," called out Larry.

"I do not think we have made any mistake—what say you, Maury?"

"I am content, Burt," answered Maury Sanford, and the two young men mounted the box with Larry, leav-

ing the prisoner inside, and bound to the coach so that he could not slip out when darkness came on.

"There is such a character, then, as Shadow Bill, who resembles Buffalo Bill?" asked Burt Sprague as Larry drove on once more.

"There be, fer I has heerd o' his doin's often, an' they do say he is that like Buffalo Bill he could pass as his twin brother, and he plays the scout, too."

"I should think the scout would make it his business to look him up."

"He's layin' fer him, you bet, and will catch him some time, never fear; but I hopes that it were not Shadder Bill that has got our boodle."

"So do I; but I think we are on the safe side, or honesty in a face goes for nothing, and I would stake my fortune that the man we trusted is no criminal."

"I feel the same way, Burt, and have no anxiety about my money," added Sanford.

He had hardly spoken before an exclamation broke from Left-Hand Larry's lips that fairly startled them, and both looked ahead to behold in the trail a horseman with a revolver in each hand calmly awaiting the approach of the coach, yet distant from him a couple of hundred feet.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHINEE ROAD AGENT.

The driver did not halt his team at sight of the horseman, who had ridden into the trail ahead of him.

He simply drew the horses from a rapid trot to a walk, and held his reins well in hand, ready to halt at the command of the road agent.

The two young men were surprised and Burt Sprague said:

"He is alone, so let us open fire on him."

"Hold on, pard! Don't draw a weapon, for them fellers don't travel alone, and there is plenty more ter back him."

Sprague let his revolver slip back into its holster, and decided that the driver knew best what to do.

Larry kept on until his leaders were with a few feet of the horseman; then he halted, as the man covered him with a revolver.

The spot was in a clump of heavy timber, with large boulders scattered through it, and thickets here and there.

It was on a ridge, and on the left beyond the horseman the ground went off abruptly.

As it was just sunset the heavy timber made the place gloomy, so that the horseman was not plainly seen until the coach horses halted.

Then, with a quick glance, Larry shouted:

"Oh, Lord, but it's a heathen Chinee, or I is a liar!"

"Me Chinee, allee samee, but me killee Melican man quickee, he no gieve monee."

The words were distinctly uttered and threatening, but Larry saw only a Chinaman, and he had for the race a supreme contempt, so he said, with a sneer:

"I can kill, too, heathen, so show your hand."

"Melican man foolee—big foolee! Chinaman allee lightee; he not alone."

"I believe ther beggar is right," growled Larry, and he added:

"He would not play the hand he does if alone."

"We must go slow, for he can't rob us a little bit, and might kill."

"We will be guided by you, driver," Burt Sprague remarked, just as the Chinese road agent rode toward the coach, a revolver in each hand, but he halted as he saw the prisoner's head thrust out of the coach, and seemed for a moment undecided as to what to do.

But he quickly put on a bold front again, and said as sternly as was possible in his broken English:

"Me wantee money pretty quickee."

"Well, you won't get it, for we haven't got any, having been robbed a little way back by Shadder Bill," informed Larry.

"Melican man tellee big lie."

"He's right, Chinaman, for Shadow Bill did get a big haul; but, you can get me, for if they take me on to the fort I'll be hanged before I can be proven an honest man."

"Allee lightee! me takee you along, allee samee!"

"I guess you'd better not try it on, for that man is my prisoner," called out Larry, in a determined way.

The Chinaman gave a shrill whistle, and then sat quietly on his horse, a sly grin upon his face.

The look and action spoke louder than words could have done; he felt that he was master of the situation.

"Take me, Chinaman, for I do not care to risk chances of going to the fort, though I shall put in an appearance later and show who and what I am."

"Allee lightee; me takee you; but wantee monee allee samee."

"You shall have it."

"Coachee got no monee?"

"Not a dollar! Shadow Bill got it all."

"No likee."

"And I don't likee hevin' to stop here chinning with a heathen Chinee, so if you intend to take this man, do so, and let me go on my way."

"I half believe you have got no one near to help you, and I've a mind to make yer show your hand, heathen," said Larry.

"Me showee!" and again the Chinaman gave a whistle. Instantly a voice answered:

"All right, captain! Shall we fire?"

"No, blast you! I'm not crowdin' yer!" quickly called out Larry, the response from the rocks convincing him that the Chinaman had help near, though in what force he could not guess.

"Allee lightee; no killee this time," cried the Celestial road agent.

He called to the prisoner to get out of the coach and come with him.

"I can't, for I'm ironed and tied in as well," he explained.

The Chinaman gave another whistle, then rode up to the coach door, and, drawing a knife, cut the lariat that bound the prisoner.

"Wantee key," he said, laconically.

"I ain't got it, for Buffalo Bill took it with him."

"Buffalo Billee? Where Buffalo Billee?" and the Chinaman gave an anxious look about him in the gathering gloom.

"It wasn't Buffalo Bill, but Shadow Bill, Chinaman; but I don't believe he took the key," the prisoner averred.

"Then ask him, for here he comes!" cried Left-Hand Larry, and, as he spoke all heard the rapid clatter of hoofs.

As quick as a flash the prisoner, his hands still manacled, made a bound out of the coach and disappeared in the thicket, while the Chinaman wheeled his horse and spurred into the timber with equal suddenness.

Larry called out: "Hold on, Chinaman, and I'll interdoose yer!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE THIRD HALT.

"Well, of all things I ever seen, this beats 'em—a Chinee road agent on the Overland!"

"I don't quite grasp it, but it were a fact, fer you seen him, gents, with yer own eyes."

So said Left-Hand Larry as the Chinaman disap-

peared in the gloom of the timber, as the prisoner had done.

"It was a Chinee beyond doubt," remarked Burt Sprague, while Maury Sanford answered: "Yes, but who have we to meet now?"

That was the question that was worrying Larry, for he heard the hooffalls of quite a number of horses, coming at a rapid canter along the trail.

It could not be Buffalo Bill, unless he had returned with an escort for the coach; or had sent one after it.

Waiting anxiously the coming of the horsemen, Larry did not start his team again, and a moment after saw them sweep around the bend in the gathering twilight.

"Ho! Larry, is that you?",

"Halt!" cried a commanding voice, and a cavalry officer, a Lieutenant Keyes, from Fort Faraway, drew rein by the coach, while his men halted at his order.

"Oh, Lieutenant Keyes! It's you, is it, sir, and glad am I to see you, for we've had a rough time of it this afternoon," announced Larry.

"So I heard from Buffalo Bill, whom I met, and also that you had some guests of the colonel with you, and whom we have been expecting."

"I am Lieutenant Keyes, gentlemen, and I believe you are Messrs. Sprague and Sanford?"

The two young hunters responded courteously to the handsome cavalry officer, while Larry called out:

"It would be like lookin' for a needle in a haystack, lieutenant, but before you came up a lot o' road agints had us foul, an' ther captain were a heathen Chinee, as I am a wicked sinner."

"Ah! and our coming frightened them off?"

"Yes, sir."

"Which way did they go?"

"Over ther ridge, sir."

"It would be useless to follow in the darkness, but how many were in the band?"

"We only saw ther Chinee, capt'in."

"A real Chinaman, Larry, a leader of road agents?"

"Yes, sir, fer a fact."

"I have heard of such a man, yet hardly believed the story."

"It is true, sir, nevertheless," Burt Sprague said.

"And he fled at hearing our approach?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, from what Buffalo Bill told me, he could not rob you of much, as he gave me all you intrusted to him to carry on to the fort, and I suppose I had bet-

ter keep it in my possession, as there might be such a thing as your being held up again, for I cannot remain as your guard, as I must hasten on to the fort now."

"Yes, sir, please retain our valuables and money," Burt Sprague said, while Larry remarked:

"You bet I wouldn't want to carry it on this run, lieutenant, for there's a hoodoo on me ter-day, I'm thinkin'."

"I will carry all safely through, and your prisoner, too, whom Cody told me about, for I have a led horse. Where is he?"—meaning the prisoner.

"Gone!"

"Where?"

"Ther Chinaman helped him off, though he's got Buffalo Bill's irons on him, and I has ther key."

"That is too bad, for the fellow is a gallows bird."

"I only wish I had come up with you sooner."

"But I'll carry your treasure safely through, and I'll acquaint the colonel, gentlemen, of your coming, so he will be awaiting you."

"Good-evening, and permit me to hope that you will have no further delay and trouble on your way."

With this the lieutenant was away at a canter, followed by his escort of half a dozen troopers.

"A dashing young officer that," said Burt Sprague, as Larry once more drove on his way.

"Ther ain't no better than he is, pard, fer I hev known Lieutenant Ed Keyes well and jist what he hev done."

"He'd fight old Nick with spurs on, he would, and he's a gent frum Wayback; but I guess we kin git through now without no more trouble, fer thet Chinaman went off as though he'd keep ther pace up all night."

"And the prisoner, driver?"

"Ah! I fergot about him."

"Maybe ther Chinees were thet scared he fergot him, too, and ag'in maybe he hed a spare horse fer him; but whatsoever goes, I has got ther key to his irons," and Larry chuckled over the thought, and drove on through the darkness with a skill that was the admiration of his two passengers.

Thus, mile after mile was put behind the coach, a couple of relay stations had been passed and the horses changed, and Larry had just remarked that they were beyond all danger, when, with startling suddenness, out of the darkness ahead came the command:

"Halt that coach!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS CAPTURE.

"This coach is halted, darn yer," and Left-Hand Larry spoke in very ill humor, for his prophecy had been very quickly proven untrue, that they were in no further danger of being held up.

"This is really growing monotonous," Sprague remarked, while Sanford rejoined: "So long as they don't halt us with bullets I can stand it."

Having drawn rein, as commanded, Larry sat awaiting developments.

He had not long to wait, for a horseman rode out of the gloom and approached the coach.

"It ain't ther Chinees ag'in," muttered Larry.

"Nor the black road agent," added Burt Sprague.

"By rights it oughter be an Injun this time," growled Larry, and then he called out:

"Now, who is yer and what does yer want?"

"I am Captain Coolhand of the Mounted Sports—you may have heard of me?"

"I have, and too often, with nothin' in yer favor."

"You should not complain, Larry, for I have given you your life scores of times."

"Thankee for nuthin'."

"Well, what have you along that is valuable, Larry?"

"Seein' as yer cutthroats has held me up twice afore, nothin'."

"Who has held you up?"

"A nigger and a Chinees road agent, so I were lookin' fer you ter turn out a Injun."

"Not so bad as that, Larry. But what did they get?"

"Nothin'."

"You had a rich freight along, though, as I happen to know?"

"Yas, I had, only did yer see an officer and his men pass a while ago?"

"Yes, but I get only steel and lead from soldiers, and it's gold I want."

"Well, yer won't git it this time."

"Why not?"

"The soldiers took it fer safe keepin'."

"Is this true?"

"It be."

"Well, you have two passengers with you that I wish."

"What for?"

"I have taken a fancy to capture them."

"Yer better change yer fancy, unless yer want every man in ther fort on top of yer."

The road agent captain laughed, and then replied:

"I take all chances, Larry, as you know, and I intend to relieve you of your prisoners—hold, there, gentlemen, for you are covered by a dozen rifles—stand ready, men!"

The warning was given at the sudden act of both Sprague and Sanford to resist, and the command was issued to men in hiding, for an answer came in a deep voice:

"All ready, sir."

"Hold, pards, don't throw yer lives away, fer he is jist playin' a bold hand ter make yer show yer gold."

"We have none, so he is foiled," Maury Sanford remarked.

"We want you; your gold we will finger later," replied the road agent.

"Does yer mean ter kidnap these gents?" asked Larry.

"Yes."

"What fer?"

"I have reasons I cannot make known, but they go with me."

Larry quickly grasped the hand of Burt Sprague, and the act certainly saved the life of Captain Coolhand, for in a second more the young hunter would have sent a bullet through his heart.

"Don't be a fool, fer God's sake," cried Larry, excitedly.

"Must we submit to capture with weapons in our hands to defend ourselves?"

"I am with you, Burt, if you say fight," cried Sanford.

"Gentlemen, as Larry said, don't be fools, for the odds are ten to one against you.

"An order from me would kill the three of you, and had you killed me your lives would have instantly ended.

"But, Larry, I owe you my life, for that was a close call for me, as I was caught off my guard.

"I shall not forget it," but whether he meant his close call or that Larry had saved his life was not quite clear to those who heard his words.

"Yer did have a close call, and it should teach you a lesson, so let me go on now, for, with ther nigger, Chinees, and yerself holdin' me up I am away behind on my run.

"Come, git out o' ther way and let me start my team, as we has nothin' fer yer ter git."

"Hold on, for I differ with you, as your two passengers are booty enough for me.

"Come, gentlemen, you must go with me."

The two young men seemed still half inclined to resist, but a low warning from Larry urged them not to do so rash an act, and he added:

"I is sorry, gents, but yer has ter go.

"I'll soon report it, and it won't be long afore you is free.

"Better go and save trouble."

"We will be guided by you, driver, for you know best; but it seems cowardly to thus submit," Burt Sprague said.

"It is not, but rather common sense."

"Dismount from that box, gentlemen, one at a time."

They did so, and a moment after the road agent captain called out sternly:

"Drive on, Larry, and tell Colonel Duncan that I have his guests in my keeping."

"Yas, and you'll be the colonel's guest, afore long, or I doesn't know ther man," answered Larry, and, with a good-by to his two passengers, whom he had come to like and admire, he drove on his way once more.

At first he let his horses jog along, but after a short distance he started them into a brisk pace, determined to bear the news of their capture as quickly as possible to the fort.

Drawing down to a walk, as he came to a bit of ragged traveling, he heard the rapid clatter of hoofs behind him and at once he came to a halt, with the remark:

"What, ag'in?"

A moment after a horseman came into view through the darkness, and suddenly drawing rein as he reached the coach, Left-Hand Larry called out quickly:

"Buffalo Bill!

"Hooray fer you, pard, fer yer is ther very man I wants ter see."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MEETING ON THE TRAIL.

When Buffalo Bill rode on his way toward Outfit City, after leaving the coach, he was considerably puzzled at what had been told him by Larry, of his having been held up by a black road agent.

"It could be none other than Darkie Dick, that is certain, so the claim he made to being innocent must be false, though I really did trust in him.

"At any rate he gave me warning that the road agents knew of the coming of the Californians, and intended to rob them.

"But that must not be done, so I'll hasten back to Outfit City and tell Mr. Winter just what I have found out, and then I must ride for it to head off that extra coach and its treasure."

So mused Buffalo Bill as he rode along at a canter on the trail to Outfit City, keeping up the pace until his keen ears suddenly caught the sound of approaching hoofs.

Instantly he wheeled off the trail and sought shelter behind a large boulder, for he knew not who he was to meet.

And he stood ready, rifle in hand, to fight if he had to.

"Cavalry," he suddenly muttered, as he caught sight of a party of horsemen coming into view some distance down the trail, and he rode out of his hiding place.

It was the party of Lieutenant Keyes, and the young officer greeted the scout most cordially as they met, the latter remarking:

"I'm awful glad to meet you, Lieutenant Keyes, for I am carrying more money than one man is entitled to, and I wish to place the responsibility of its safety upon you."

"All right, Cody, my shoulders are broad, and I am willing to stagger under all the money you can heap on," answered the lieutenant, who listened to the scout's story of how he had come in possession of the money, and learned that the coach, with the two young men and the man Buffalo Bill had made a prisoner was not many miles on ahead.

"I'll overtake it by night, Cody, never fear, but what shall I report to the colonel for you?"

"Nothing, thank you, for he knows what I am doing," was the answer, and so they parted, going their separate ways.

It was growing dark when Buffalo Bill once more drew rein, for again he heard hoofbeats approaching.

Going into hiding and with a keen watch ahead, he saw another party of horsemen approaching.

"Why, it is the boss," he cried, and riding out from his place of concealment, he called out:

"Ho, Captain Winter, I am glad to meet you."

"Why, Cody, this is lucky, for I have news for you. Come aside with me," and Loyd Winter left the escort of four pony riders awaiting in the trail, while he led the scout apart from them and said, eagerly:

"I missed a letter sent through to me, for it went on to Good Luck Camp by mistake, and was at once sent back to me by the agent, a special pony rider bringing it."

"I hope it has not done much harm, sir, by the delay in reaching you."

"No, for finding you as I do, there is time to act.

"You see, I started at once to see if I could find you, and if not to serve as an escort myself."

"For what, sir?"

"The Californians!"

"Ah!"

"You have heard of them, then?"

"Yes, it was the letter from the agent at Death-Trap that was delayed.

"He wrote me that the California coach would leave Death-Trap a couple of hours behind the regular, and that would bring it to Fort Faraway at midnight, for the regular coach is due at Outfit City at breakfast in the morning."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, by hard riding you can head off the extra, for it reaches the trail you intended to guide it by around the regular beat between Faraway and Outfit City, thus flanking the part of the way most to be dreaded."

"Yes, sir, I can head it off in time, or even turn it back to take the other trail if it has passed where it branches off."

"Good!"

"Then it is safe; but had I not met you I intended to go on and escort it through, though you know the company does not allow that; but I intended to make an exception in this case, there being a young lady along, and so much treasure at stake."

"It would be but right to do so, sir; but I hope I can flank the Mounted Sports all right."

"I sincerely hope so; but were you returning to Outfit City?"

"Yes, sir, I was going back to have a talk with you."

"That must mean that you have made some discovery of importance, as your intention was to push on and meet the Californians."

"I made several discoveries, all important, I think, Captain Winter."

"Out with them, Cody, and let me in if I can help you."

"First, sir, I was held up myself by the Mounted Sports, as I believed, but a search on my return revealed that Captain Coolhand clearly did the work alone. I was completely taken in," and Buffalo Bill smiled, while the boss said:

"With a rifle covering his heart, Cody, a man is not to be blamed for obeying orders."

CHAPTER XIV.

UNLOOKED-FOR FOES.

"That is a very kind way of looking at it on your part, Captain Winter, but I confess I supposed there was more than one rifle leveled at me, or I would have been tempted to play a trump card also; in other words, to have taken chances!" Buffalo Bill said in answer to the response of the boss.

"I know your nature, Bill, and am well aware that you must think the odds heavy against you to submit.

"But tell me of the affair."

"There is little to tell, sir, save that I was halted, told that a dozen rifles covered me, and warned that I was known to be here to hunt down the Mounted Sports, so must give up my intention or take the consequences.

"He spoke of the band as the Mounted Sharps, rather than Sports, as they are generally called, repeating his warning to me and then ordering me to ride on.

"I called to him several times, but no answer was given, so I did ride on, to soon after come under another adventure.

"Ah! another hold-up!"

"Not exactly, though it was a voluntary surrender on the part of the horseman I saw on the trail.

"You have heard of the negro at Faraway who was said to have robbed the paymaster, entered the quarters of the officers, took money and valuables, and then made his escape, killing the sentinel in doing so, and could not even be trailed?"

"Yes, he was called Darkie Dick, the black burglar."

"That is the man, sir."

"I wish to tell you just what occurred, only I must swear you to perfect secrecy, as I allowed him to go free for a purpose.

"He gave a setback to my trust in him by later hold-

ing up Left-Hand Larry's coach, but for all that, I am glad I allowed him to go free, for what he did tell me."

"Why, Larry had a small fortune along with him," excitedly said Loyd Winter.

"All safe, sir, for I happened along before the coach was robbed, and to get where he did, the black burglar must have gone by some secret trail from where I met him," and Buffalo Bill told the story of his meeting with the negro, and how he had told him that the Mounted Sharps knew of the coming of the Californians.

Loyd Winter, called by courtesy "captain," looked considerably troubled at what he heard, and said:

"It goes to prove, Cody, that my suspicion is right, that spies are very close to me and to the other agents of the company to get the information the outlaws do of what is going over the trail; but you have said you would solve the mystery, and find out the culprits, and I feel much relieved for the future."

"I feel that they can be unearthed, sir; but I have something else to tell you.

"Did you see Lieutenant Keyes when he passed through Outfit City?"

"Yes, he had an early supper with me, intending to push right on to the fort."

"Well, he has the money Larry carried, and also what the two young men had, for I turned it over to him, and, as he goes over the trail, he will be on hand to protect the coach."

"That is fortunate, indeed."

"On my way back I took a look for tracks at the spot where I was held up, and found there only the trail of one horse, and that showed me that Captain Coolhand was alone, or his men, if he had any, were on foot.

"I decided to ride back to Outfit City and acquaint you with all that had happened, and then push on again over the trail, which I will do now with all haste, as I am anxious to head off the California coach, now that you know it is coming, and at what time."

"Yes, that is all there is to do, Cody; but how is your horse?"

"Have you a good one that I can exchange with, as mine has been pushed a little hard."

"Get what you wish at the relay station, for I will write you an order to that effect, as some of the stock-tenders may not know you."

"Thank you, sir."

The order was written, and after a few words more, Captain Winter turned and started back to Outfit

City, while Buffalo Bill put his horse in a canter and went back over the trail to meet the California coach and save it from the outlaws, whom he now knew would be on the watch for its coming, and be prepared to hold it up.

Unerringly he kept the trail, and mile after mile was cast behind him.

Coming to a stage relay station, he called up the stocktender, showed his order from the boss, and was given a fresh mount, and a fine animal it was, too.

In a sweeping gallop he went on his way then, with no thought of being again disturbed, as the coach having passed some time before, he saw no reason for the outlaws to be lying in wait, and it really gave him a start to hear the loud command:

"Halt!

"Hands up or take the consequences!"

Realizing how much depended upon him did he expect to save the California coach, Buffalo Bill upon sudden impulse, decided to risk running the gantlet of whatever danger threatened him.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COURTEOUS OUTLAW.

Buffalo Bill was too well accustomed to sudden dangers to be caught off his guard, and at the very first words of the threatening command to halt, he made up his mind to risk a dash in the fading light, as it was about the hour of sunset, and try to push through.

Were he captured, he well knew that the California coach would come along the trail unchecked, and run into that very ambush of outlaws.

The regular coach, too, ahead of the extra some couple of hours, would also be held up, and that would mean robbery perhaps to the driver or some of his passengers.

Buffalo Bill, therefore, realized all that depended upon him, and, dropping upon one side of his horse, opposite from whence the voice had come, and whipping out his revolver and firing at random, he drove his spurs into his horse and dashed forward.

Buffalo Bill saw flashes mingling with those of his revolver, he heard shots and the whistle of bullets, felt his horse give a mighty bound, and then go down in a heap, rolling over him.

Then he felt all was a blank and blackness before him.

But the sensation of unconsciousness could not have

been but momentary to him, for he attempted to rise, to drag himself from beneath the weight of his dead horse, realizing as he did so that he was not seriously hurt.

But suddenly he beheld a form bending over him, and a revolver's cold muzzle touched his forehead, while he heard the stern words:

"Resist, and you are a dead man!"

His revolver had fallen from his hand, and, realizing that he was at the mercy of the speaker, he said:

"You win the game, pard, and I pass."

"Who are you?"

"My pards call me Buffalo Bill."

"Ah!"

The name was evidently a surprise to the man. He really appeared startled.

"Buffalo Bill, the scout," he said, in a low tone.

"Yes."

"Where were you going?"

"To the fort."

"Where are you from just now?"

"Outfit City."

"What was your errand there?"

"That's my business, not yours."

"Why did you try to run the gantlet of my men?"

"I've often run a worse gantlet."

"You risked your life."

"I often do."

"Your horse is dead."

"Had he not fallen, I'd have gotten through."

"Are you hurt?"

"None to speak of."

"I have no personal quarrel with you, Buffalo Bill, so will allow you to go your way."

"Thanks."

"Now tell me who you are that is patrolling this Overland trail and firing upon a government officer."

"I am one of the band who call themselves Mounted Sharps, Sports, or whatever other name you care to give them."

"I thought so, but why do you allow me to go free for I certainly have a quarrel with you, and might not be so merciful did I catch you."

"That is my business."

"Ah!"

"And where are your men?"

"Within twenty feet of you."

"Many of them?"

"Too many even for the great Buffalo Bill to resist."

"Introduce me."

The outlaw saw that the scout believed he was alone, and was meditating some bold game to spring upon him, so he said quickly:

"I have given you your freedom for reasons I cannot explain.

"Had I known who you were I would not have ordered my men to fire upon you.

"As they did, I am glad they did you no other harm than killing your horse.

"Now, take your saddle and bridle off your horse and go while you can."

"You are so good to me, I am emboldened to ask the loan of a horse.

"You couldn't oblige me, could you, for I'll return him?"

"You are about as cool a man as I ever met, Buffalo Bill."

"How do I compare with Captain Coolhand?"

"Not at all, for you are an honest man, he accursed with crime."

"Thanks again.

"But about the loan of a horse?"

"Get one at the next stage relay station."

"It is twenty miles from here."

"Not much of a walk to such a man as you are.

"Now go while you can."

"Then there is a string attached to my going, eh?"

"The men now with me are my especial band; but others will soon be here, led by Captain Coolhand, and he may be less lenient than I, while his men certainly will, regarding you as their particular foe."

"I think I had better go," said the scout, dryly, and he added:

"I thank you, certainly, for the favor shown me.

"May I ask your name?"

"No; I am a mere nobody; but go."

The scout was again struck by the reply, but quickly drew his saddle and bridle from his dead horse, felt around for his pistol, picked it up, and said:

"Some day we may become better acquainted.

"Good-night."

The outlaw still covered him with his revolver, muttered a good-night, and saw him walk away in the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI.

GETTING A MOUNT.

"Well, I am not the one to hoof it twenty miles when there is a chance to get a horse, and so much, depending just now on my making good time.

"That outlaw was a gentleman, in his way, and did not even borrow my spare change, and it doesn't seem just right to rob him of a horse; but then he shot mine, and it will simply be an exchange and no questions asked.

"I'll try it on at any rate."

So mused Buffalo Bill, as he halted in the trail a few hundred yards from where he had so nearly lost his life.

He had his saddle, bridle, and traps on his back, and, having decided to take the risk of getting a mount from the outlaws, he placed them down by the side of the road, marked the place well in his mind, and then disappeared in the timber on the left.

His intention was to find out just where the outlaws had their horses, while lying in ambush, and to cut an animal out if he could.

He also wished to discover how many outlaws there were at that point.

His nameless captor, a mere "nobody," as he had said himself, had told him that Captain Coolhand was expected along soon with other men.

This, then, must be the place where the California coach was to be held up.

If so, it would be hours before the regular coach would be along, and it, too, carried a treasure. Buffalo Bill decided to have the driver, whom he knew well, to intrust it to him, to carry around the point of danger by the secret trail he intended to lead the California coach.

By doing this the mounted sharps would get nothing by holding up the regular coach, while they would wait in vain for the coming of the Californians, who would, guided by the scout, give them the slip.

But the first thing to do was to get a mount.

Pushing his way through the timber, as noiselessly as an Indian, and as unerringly, to come up in the rear of the outlaws' place of ambush, by a wide flank movement Buffalo Bill approached the trail, and halted when he knew he could not be more than several hundred yards from it.

He had come to an open spot in the timber, where

there was a bit of meadowland, and beyond the land rose toward the ridge along which ran the stage trail.

Listening attentively, Buffalo Bill heard sounds ahead of him.

Crouching down, he kept silent for a few minutes.

Then he muttered: "Their horses are in the open, between me and the hill.

"If there is no guard over them, I will be all right.

"If they are guarded, I must have an animal, anyhow."

Having come to this bold resolve, Buffalo Bill scouted around in the edge of the timber until he came to the base of the slope.

There he beheld the horses staked out to feed.

Creeping as near as he dared, without being more certain of his ground, he was enabled to see that there were eight or ten animals at least.

"It was lucky I made no break when the idea took possession of me that that fellow was all alone.

"I kept myself out of trouble that time—perhaps out of the grave.

"Now, I wonder if there is a guard over those horses.

"There is one animal a little apart from the others, and I'll see if I can reach him, and what he is like, for I must have the best."

Creeping up to the horse he found him staked out by a short rope, and a dark object on the ground near showed where his saddle and bridle lay.

The animal slightly started at his approach, but a low word soothed him, and as he greeted the horse affectionately he muttered:

"This one is good enough for me.

"I'll take him.

"I do not think there is a guard here, and I could stampede the whole corral.

"But I won't.

"I'll just let them think this horse got his rope pin up and strayed off."

So saying, the scout drew up the pin, and, allowing it to drag through the grass, led the horse toward the timber.

The horses all looked up as their comrade was seen moving off, and one gave a low whinny as though to ask the reason.

But Buffalo Bill held his hand hard on the nostrils of his captive and allowed no answering neigh.

Soon the shelter of the timber was reached, and, going slowly and as noiselessly as possible, he led the horse out into the trail at the point where he had left his saddle and bridle:

They were still there, and quickly the scout saddled up and mounted.

"A little behind time, but still on the trail," he muttered in a grim tone as he settled himself firmly in the

saddle and started his horse at a canter as soon as he felt that he was out of earshot of the ambushed outlaws.

CHAPTER XVII.

LARRY TELLS HIS STORY.

Buffalo bill felt highly elated over his success in securing a mount.

And the animal was a good one—a horse to be proud of.

He was easy-gaited, willing, full of spirit, and went along as though he was possessed of great endurance.

The scout quite forgot his hard fall, stunning shock, and the few bruises and cut or two he had received when his horse went down dead under him.

Several times as he rode along in a swinging gallop he congratulated himself upon not having made the mistake that the outlaw who had held him up was all alone.

"I am lucky as usual," he muttered.

His desire was to overtake the coach of Left-Hand Larry and hoped to soon after meet the regular on its way to Outfit City.

This, he had been told by Captain Winter, was driven by Nebraska Ned, a man whom he well knew, and who had been pony rider and scout before he took to driving stage.

Captain Winter had also told him that the California coach would doubtless have Lige Lumley on the box for the run from Death-Trap Canyon to Outfit City, and this driver the scout also knew well, so anticipated no trouble in having him obey his orders to follow him off of the stage trail.

The relay station, which Buffalo Bill had feared he would have to walk to, was reached in good time, but, as his horse seemed perfectly fresh and improved steadily on acquaintance, he determined to make no change, but to stick to him.

So he passed the station without halting or making himself known.

His horse kept up the same untiring pace, and he was dashing swiftly along, when in an open space at the top of a rise he saw the coach ahead of him.

"I have either ridden faster than I thought, or Larry has had a mishap, for I did not expect to overtake him for some miles yet," said the scout.

Another moment he drew rein by the side of the coach as Left-Hand Larry called out to him that he "was the very man he wanted to see."

"Well, Larry, here I am; but has anything gone wrong?"

"Yes, everything."

"Where are the two gentlemen passengers?"

"Gone."

"Ah!"

"And the prisoner?"

"Also gone."

"Then you have been again held up?" said the scout, anxiously.

"Pard Bill, it is wuss than that."

"Have they been killed?"

"No, but the road agents has got 'em."

"All three?"

"Sure."

"Where was this, Larry?"

"Back from here a mile."

"Strange they did not hold you up, pard."

"A mile back?"

"Yes."

"By a group of boulders, with heavy timber beyond?"

"That's their place."

"I heard a sound in the timber as I came by, but supposed it was a pack of coyotes or deer frightened at my coming."

"They was two-legged coyotes, Bill, and the worst kind of 'em."

"Tell me just what happened, Larry, for it distresses me to learn that these two young men have been captured, as the colonel will feel it greatly, for they were his guests, you know."

"It couldn't be helped, Pard Bill."

"It was Captain Coolhand himself did the work, and yer know it don't do to trifle with him, so as he said he wanted them young tenderfeet I chipped in my advice for them ter go along, though they was game and wanted ter fight it out."

"I know'd what thet meant, so I says no, and Cap'n Coolhand he just took 'em with him."

"And released the prisoner Nick Ross?"

"You bet he didn't."

"Did he escape from you?"

"Pard Bill, yer heard me say thet I 'spect next time it would be a Chinaman, arter ther nigger had held me up?"

"Yes."

"Well, it were a Chinaman," and Larry uttered the words in a way that showed he well knew the surprise he was springing upon the scout.

"Do you mean that you were held up by a Chinaman road agent, Larry?"

"Thet's what I mean."

"And he it was who released the prisoner?"

"His coming did, fer ther prisoner released himself."

"I'll tell yer jist how it all happened."

And he told the scout the whole story.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT BUFFALO BILL HEARD.

It was with the deepest interest that Buffalo Bill listened to the driver's story of his adventure with the Chinese road agent.

He did not ask a single question until Larry had ended his recital, and then he said:

"Well, Larry, this has been a run you will not soon forget."

"You bet I won't."

"Lieutenant Keyes put the Chinaman to flight?"

"In great shape."

"The heathen was game enough until the soldiers came, and then he went off like the devil were chasin' him close."

"And the lieutenant carried the money on to the fort?"

"Yes, pard."

"The Chinaman got nothing?"

"Only a scare."

"Are you sure it was a Chinaman?"

"He were from way back."

"He wasn't playin' no game of heathen, and ef he had a trump keerd up his sleeve ther lieutenant didn't give him a chance ter play it."

"And Nick Ross went with him?"

"If that prisoner were Nick Ross he did."

"That is, he lighted out quick on foot, while the Chinaman scooted on top o' his horse, and I were in hopes he'd tumble off, only he didn't."

"And the prisoner still had his irons on?"

"Yes, fer I had ther key yer gave me."

"Well, I am sorry he escaped, but we may get a grip on him again some day."

"Maybe."

"I am surprised that you have been held up by both a negro and a Chinese road agent, and Captain Coolhand as well, and regret exceedingly that the two young men were captured."

"So does I; but ther money is safe."

"I wish that they were."

"But Coolhand's motive in kidnaping them is to get ransom, of course."

"Jist so."

"Now, I have to push on, Larry, so will leave you to come along at your ease, for they can't rob you now."

"Not much."

"They can't git blood out of a turnip, I has heerd, but I owes it to you, Pard Bill, thet they didn't git ther money they came fer."

"That is all safe."

"Does yer not make out thet them mounted sports has got more information than is right they should have of what the company carries over ther Overland, unless there do be spies in its service ter give secrets away?"

"Sh— Larry, do not suggest such a thing to any one, for if there are spies, and they know they are suspected, there will be no catching them."

"That's so, and I'll keep dark, Pard Bill."

"You ought to meet Nebraska Ned's coach within the next hour, should you not?"

"Yes, pard, but I'm behind ter-night, and won't

reach ther fort before daybreak, so report my coming, please, ef I ain't kilt on ther way."

"All right, Larry."

"Good-night, and I hope you will have no more trouble."

"I hope so."

"Good-night, Pard Bill."

Buffalo Bill again rode on at a canter, while Larry followed more leisurely, feeling much better now that he had told his story to the scout, and he knew of the escape of his prisoner and the capture of his passengers.

Continuing on his way, Buffalo Bill's thoughts were busy.

He was reviewing the incidents of the afternoon and night.

Leaving Outfit City at noon, he had first been held up by Captain Coolhand himself, then had met the Black Burglar under most remarkable circumstances, had next come upon the coach, received the large amount of money it carried, in turn had given it into the keeping of Lieutenant Keyes, and then had followed his meeting with Loyd Winter, learned the tidings of the California coach being on the trail near, and returning to its rescue had had his horse shot, been made a prisoner by a road agent, released, then secured for himself a mount on one of the outlaws' horses, and, overtaking Larry's coach, news had been told him that he greatly regretted, in the capture of the two young men and the escape of the prisoner.

"Well, this has been a checkered trail and no mistake, since I left Outfit City and took upon myself the duty of running down the mounted sports, an undertaking that Loyd Winter appeared to think so impossible, that he looked upon my promise to do so as a mere bluff.

"But I will show him yet that I am not bluffing, but in deadly earnest from start to finish.

"Now I must soon meet the regular coach, and before I come to the extra that follows, it will have passed the trail by which I intend to guide it around the Overland to Outfit City; but I can turn it back, and be well on my way along the valley trail when dawn comes—ah! I hear the rumble of the coach wheels now, and it has stopped!

"By Jupiter's ghost! it is held up, for I hear voices!" and Buffalo Bill drew rein and listened.

CHAPTER XIX.

BUFFALO BILL'S BLUFF.

Listening attentively for a moment, Buffalo Bill took in the situation in the trail ahead of him with the quickness of one who was trained to think and act on the impulse of the moment.

It was starlight, yet there was scattering timber along the trail which cast shadows here and there.

Attuned to hear the slightest sound, the scout had heard the rumble of the coach wheels, then the silence that followed a halt, voices, and he knew that in that lone place it could mean but one thing.

It was a hold-up of the coach by road agents.

Knowing that the California extra was coming through, as they did, the outlaws seemed to have patrolled many miles of the trail, determined that it should not escape them.

Nearly all the way from Outfit City to Death-Trap Canyon the trail ran through a country that was a perfect paradise for outlawry, for men could so readily escape, either mounted or on foot.

The fort was some ten miles off the regular trail, but the coaches went out of their way, when occasion demanded, to visit it.

But its very location, and the fact that the soldiers had all they could do to guard the country beyond from hostile redskins, rendered the outlaws bolder.

Then, too, they were supposed to be in large force, their numbers being put anywhere from twenty to forty men, and being splendidly mounted, thoroughly armed, led by a clever, daring leader, knowing every deer trail and mountain fastness as they did, they could put at defiance any force sent after them that was less than a couple of hundred men.

Of course, the commandant of the fort did all in his power to protect the Overland trail, to guard against the coaches and pony riders being held up by the outlaws; but to patrol the trails for hundreds of miles would have demanded a regiment or more, and then it could not have been successfully done.

Feeling that the mounted sports were stretched all along the trail, Buffalo Bill reasoned that those who had now held up Nebraska Ned's coach were necessarily few in number, and so he determined to alone take the chances of driving them off from their game.

So he gathered his reins well in hand, drew a revolver and called out suddenly:

"Forward men!

"The outlaws have halted the coach!"

The deep tones of the scout echoed through the timber, and then came the command:

"Lieutenant, throw flankers out and corral them.

"We will keep to the trail!"

As he uttered the last words Buffalo Bill began to advance rapidly up the trail, rattling his canteen against his revolver, and making all the noise he could to impress the outlaws with the idea that he had considerable force.

Several times he issued orders to imaginary foes, and yet when he came within sight of the coach, halted in the trail, there was but one to give battle to whatever foes he might have to encounter.

But he was ready to face all odds, and reined up alongside the coach prepared for a death struggle.

"Ho, Nebraska Ned, is that you?"

"It's me.

"And I'm that tickled I'm almost a fallin' off my seat—what! it's you, Buffalo Bill?" answered Nebraska Ned.

"Yes, Ned, and you were held up?"

"You bet I was.

"Yer come with ther soldiers just in time to save us.

"But whar is they?"

"Who?"

"The soldiers."

"In my mind."

"Does you mean they didn't come?"

"Yes, I am alone."

"And you made all that racket a coming?"

"My horse and I."

"Why, yer scared ther road agents crazy.

"They went off at the first sound of yer voice, and they went in a hurry, too."

"I am glad of it.

"But how many were there?"

"I seen but one."

"Mounted, of course?"

"Yes, and, Pard Bill, I has got to tell you that the one I saw was a nigger."

"A negro?"

"Yes, or he were a white man blackened up; but then he had the talk of a nigger."

"What did he say?"

"First he halted me, and then he told me he'd make a pepper box of the old coach if there was a show of resistance.

"I told him there was only me and a lady along, and he'd get neither lead, steel nor gold.

"But he said he knew that there was plenty of gold along, and he'd take care as to who gave out the lead and steel.

"Just then your voice sounded out as clear as Gabriel's trumpet at Judgment Day, and he made himself scarce so sudden I hardly seen him go."

"Well, Ned, I am glad you came through all right; but have you any riches along?"

"I have, sir," said a voice strangely soft and musical, and a face looked out of the coach window.

CHAPTER XX.

A FAIR PASSENGER.

The voice and the words uttered at once turned the attention of Buffalo Bill upon the speaker.

Ever as courteous as a cavalier, he doffed his sombrero, and riding up to the side of the coach, sat upon his horse with uncovered head, while he said:

"I am sorry, miss, that you have met with an alarm.

"Are you traveling alone, may I ask?"

"Yes, sir.

"But I do not mind the alarm, as long as I saved my money."

"Yes, that is fortunate."

"And to you I am grateful for it, as your daring rush to the rescue, though alone, for I heard your conversation with the driver, was what saved us."

"I was coming along the trail, heard Nebraska Ned halted, so it was my duty to help him out."

"And you nobly did so, sir, and if you bear the name by which the driver called you, I can understand your brave act, as I have heard much of Buffalo Bill, the famous scout."

Buffalo Bill bowed low at the compliment, but was silent.

The voice of the passenger was very winning, and he decided that she must be a young girl, and lovely.

Some officer's daughter, he decided, and yet he could not place her, so asked:

"May I inquire if you are from the fort, and I fail to recognize you?"

"Oh, no."

But she did not say who she was or where from, so the scout asked:

"Then we have not met before, miss?"

"Never, though I trust we may meet again, when I can more befittingly thank you for all you have done for me."

"Have you much money with you?"

The reply fairly startled the scout, and Nebraska Ned as well, the latter giving a whistle.

"Yes, sir; I have fifty thousand dollars in bills, and diamonds and other jewels of equally that value."

"Then I must say, miss, you have taken desperate chances in bringing such a fortune over this trail."

"It could not be avoided, sir.

"But do you think the coach is likely to be held up again?"

"I am sure that it will."

"Oh, what shall I do?"

"I do not care to alarm you, miss, but the west-bound, coming some miles back, has been held up three times to-night, and more, two gentlemen, on their way to visit Colonel Duncan at the fort, were taken prisoners by the outlaws.

"Your coach is likely to be held up a number of times, as there is a special reason for the action of the outlaws just now."

The passenger listened in silence, as also did Nebraska Ned, and then she said:

"May I ask a great favor of you, sir?"

"Any service I can render, miss, it will be my pleasure, I assure you, to do."

"Thank you."

"What is it I can serve you in, miss?"

"Will you take into your keeping the money and valuables I have, and hold them until I can send for them, sir?"

"This is a large fortune to trust to any one's keeping, miss."

"I trust it to you, sir, with perfect confidence."

"Can you not await the coming up of Left-Hand Larry's coach, miss, and go back in it to the fort?"

"No, for I must continue on my way."

"Then you are not from the fort, so must be from Death-Trap Canyon?"

"No, I am simply passing through the country."

"Then you have been most fortunate to have gotten this far in safety with your fortune."

"Having done so, I do not care to lose all."

"It would be best for you to return and await until you can get an escort."

"At least until another run, for just now, as I said, the mounted sports are more active than usual."

"I cannot return, sir."

"I must go on."

"Then I will do as you wish, and take the money and valuables to the fort, turning them over to the paymaster, awaiting your order."

"Thank you, oh, thank you, sir!"

"But let me tell you that there is risk in my doing so, as I may also be held up."

"I shall take all chances, sir, holding you blameless if you are robbed."

"But I have such confidence in the power of Buffalo Bill to elude all traps set for him, I feel assured that my riches will be safe."

"Thank you for your good opinion."

"But may I ask your name?"

"It does not matter, as you never heard it before."

"But your order will have to come for this money and the jewels."

The girl was silent for a moment, and then said, as she drew a ring from her finger.

"Here, Mr. Buffalo Bill, wear this, and when the order comes for the money and jewels, it will be accompanied by the counterpart of the ring I now give you."

The scout took the ring, and, finding that it was too small for his finger, replied:

"I will keep the ring, miss, and will give up the treasure when I receive its counterpart."

CHAPTER XXI.

BUFFALO BILL "STRIKES IT RICH."

When the scout took the ring, he could not, of course, see it in the darkness, and he made no effort to do so, simply putting it away for safe keeping.

The lady passenger had turned to her traps in the coach, and from them she took a package of what appeared to be well-filled envelopes.

Then she drew out a roll of buckskin neatly bound up.

Placing these two packages in a small satchel, she said:

"Here are my riches."

"Can you make the satchel fast to your saddle in some way, sir?"

"I will make it fast to myself, miss."

"I might be so hard pressed by a foe I would have to desert my horse."

"See, I will swing the satchel to my belt."

"And will you take the packages without knowing their contents?"

"You have told me."

"But you have not seen them."

"There is no need to do so."

"Suppose I were deceiving you?"

"How?"

"Not giving you to keep what I said there was?"

"Ah! but I'll trust you as to that, miss."

"You are very kind."

"I see no reason to doubt you."

"Still I will not be content without you seeing what the packages contain."

"I assure you there is no need to."

"But I shall insist."

"Mr. Nebraska Ned, will you give me the benefit of your lantern, for I wish you to see also."

The driver brought the stage lantern, the young girl opened the satchel, unfolded the package of envelopes and revealed that each one contained new crisp bank bills, some of large denomination.

Then she opened the buckskin roll, and a quantity of gems were disclosed, with some rare old jewelry besides.

The gems glittered in the lantern light until Nebraska Ned said:

"Why, they just dazzles my eyes."

"You can see, sir, that I told you the truth."

"I never doubted it for an instant, miss."

Buffalo Bill tried hard, as Nebraska Ned also did, to get a glance at the fair passenger's face by the light of the lantern.

But, either intentionally or through accident, she kept in the shadow, and they were not able to see her.

"Now, sir, I intrust my riches to your keeping, and I no longer fear a hold-up by road agents, for I have very little of value left, and only a small sum of money."

"I certainly thank you for your great kindness, sir."

"And I certainly appreciate your great trust in me, miss, a stranger."

"You are not a stranger."

"Indeed!"

"You are Buffalo Bill."

There was a world of meaning in the manner in which she uttered the words, and the scout raised his hat and bowed low, making no reply.

"Now, sir, good-night, for I can see that you are anxious to go on your way," and she extended a small, gloved hand.

"I am anxious to go on, as I have an important work on hand."

"Good-night, and good fortune attend you, miss.

"Good-night, Nebraska Ned."

"Just one minute, Pard Bill."

"Well?"

"What yer has said scares me, and I intends ter make yer banker for what I has got, too."

"Then you carry a rich freight, eh?"

"I carries two bags putty heavy with dust, that they give me at Death-Trap Canyon, to put through; but they'd rather have it go slow than not git there, and so I turns it over to you, Pard Bill, to keep until it's safe to carry it."

"I'll hide it away, somewhere.

"You can pick it up on another run, Ned."

"That's what I wants," was the answer.

The bags were handed out from their hiding places, and tying them together Buffalo Bill hung them across his saddle.

Then he again said good-night; expressed a wish that the coach would go through all right, and rode away.

The coach rolled on, and looking back at it, Buffalo Bill muttered:

"Now, that was the richest load I ever saw a coach carry over this trail.

"And I've got the whole outfit.

"It would have been a great game for my counterpart, Shadow Bill, to have played Buffalo Bill and gotten possession of the whole lot.

"What a bonanza he would have struck.

"It is in order now for some road agent who knows his business to hold me up.

"Now I know the very place to hide this gold dust, and I'll put it there, for it is cumbersome to carry.

"Come, old horse, we must get ahead, for there is another halt to hide this gold, and then we have got to rush for it to head off the California coach.

"My! but what a sweet voice that girl had.

"I'll bet big money she is beautiful," and the scout urged his horse into a rapid gallop.

CHAPTER XXII.

A MYSTERY OF LONE SAM'S CABIN.

Buffalo Bill did not ride very far, after leaving Nebraska Ned's coach, before he turned off the stage trail.

He seemed to know just what he was about, and to be thoroughly acquainted with the country, for even in the darkness he did not hesitate as to what course he should pursue.

After riding a couple of hundred yards off the Overland trail he halted, dismounted, hitched his horse, and swinging the two stout gold bags over his shoulder continued on his way afoot.

He had not gone very far before he came to a massive group of rocks.

They were scattered about and piled up in all kinds of shapes.

Among them he disappeared, to reappear within a few minutes and without the gold bags.

Then he rapidly retraced his way to his horse, mounted and rode on his way once more.

Mile after mile he left behind him, keeping his horse at a swift and steady pace, until at last he drew down to a walk and muttered:

"The California coach is more than two hours behind Nebraska Ned, that is certain."

But he continued on until he came to the last relay station before the trail to Fort Faraway branched off from the Overland.

The stocktender was not asleep, for he had given Nebraska Ned his relay team, and was awaiting the coming of Left-Hand Larry.

"Ho, Lone Sam, you are awake, I see," called out the scout as the stocktender came out of his cabin as he heard hoofs.

"Oh, yes; I'm on deck; but it's you, is it, Pard Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes."

"I thought it was Left-Hand Larry's coach, for he's behind to-night!

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, he will not be along for an hour yet."

"Got into trouble?"

"Yes, he was held up and some of his passengers were taken."

"That was bad."

"Did you see Lieutenant Keyes pass?"

"Long ago, pard."

"He's at the fort by this time."

"And Nebraska Ned?"

"Yes."

"Didn't you meet him?"

"I did, ten miles back."

"I say, Pard Bill, who was that pretty girl?"

"He had a lady passenger, but I did not see whether she was young or old, pretty or ugly."

"I did."

"You saw her then?"

"Pard Bill, do you know who she is?"

"I do not."

"Well, it's strange about her."

"Why so?"

"She came to this cabin on horseback."

"Indeed?"

"So she did."

"It was night, and I was inside getting supper, as Nebraska Ned generally has a bite with me, when I heard horses dash up.

"I thought it was soon for Ned, and as Lieutenant Keyes had shortly before passed, I went out to see if he had come back."

"Well?"

"Going out of the bright light into the darkness, I couldn't see well at first, but heard a man's voice and then hoofs going off.

"I was just going to call out to ask who it was when suddenly there appeared before me a woman."

"Ah!"

"There she was, right where the firelight from the door fell upon her, and she had a small satchel in her hand, a cloak thrown across her arm, and a revolver in a holster at her belt.

"She was dressed in a dark riding habit, and had on a slouch hat with a large black plume, and I tell you she was a beauty."

"Who was she?"

"I don't know."

"Where did she come from?"

"I don't know."

"Where is she?"

"She went with Nebraska Ned in his coach eastward."

"It was the lady I saw with him."

"Yes.

"And you know nothing about her?"

"Not a thing."

"Strange."

"So it is."

"Did you not ask her any questions?"

"I thought she was the wife or daughter of some officer at the fort, though I didn't recognize her as any one I'd seen before, and I tell you, Pard Bill, with all the pretty ladies at the fort there is not one to compare with her in beauty."

"Didn't you ask her who she was?"

"She asked me if she was in time to head off Nebraska Ned's coach from the fort, and I told her he would soon be along, and asked her into the cabin.

"She said she preferred to remain outside, said I must not mind her, but go on with my cooking, or I would burn my supper, and I did so, while there she sat until Ned came along."

"And so went with him?"

"Yes."

"Was he expecting her to meet him there?"

"No."

"Strange," and Buffalo Bill was certainly puzzled.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SCOUT IN A QUANDARY.

After a moment of thought and beyond doubt greatly puzzled by what Lone Sam had told him of the mysterious lady passenger, Buffalo Bill asked:

"Did Nebraska Ned know nothing about her?"

"Not a word, as far as I could find out."

"Did you not ask him?"

"That's just it, I couldn't."

"He did not get his supper, then?"

"Oh, yes.

"But the lady came and stood in the door while he ate, and we had not a chance for a word."

"It would seem as though she did not wish you to talk together?"

"So it looked."

"Did Ned not make the run to the fort to-night?"

"Yes."

"I remember now that he told me he did, but you know he does not always do so."

"No, not unless he finds the signal at the turn-off calling him in."

"Well, just where that lady came from I cannot guess, unless——"

"Unless what, Pard Bill?"

"She came from some of the ranches nearly a hundred miles north of here."

"She could come from nowhere else, for had she been at the fort Ned would have picked her up there."

"She is not from the fort, Sam."

"Then she comes from one of the ranches."

"That is it.

"You say some one came with her."

"Yes.

"I heard a man's voice, but he rode off before I saw him."

"And left her here?"

"Yes."

"And she knew about Nebraska Ned's coach?"

"Yes."

"And she took out a well-filled purse and paid him for her passage."

"To what point?"

"To Outfit City."

"Then something must be known of her there."

"The boss will doubtless know."

"Yes."

"But she is a mystery, Sam.

"But have you seen or heard of any road agents on the trail?"

"Not one."

"No one passing along on horseback?"

"Not for days."

"No extras going over the run?"

"None."

"Nor any reported?"

"No."

It was evident that Lone Sam, the stocktender, had not been told anything about the coming of the California coach.

If it came, all he would have to do would be to give the driver of it a team of fresh horses.

But it was then time that the California coach should be along; in fact, if not following further behind the regular than reported, it was already overdue.

But Buffalo Bill was willing to halt there for a short rest, as the extra coach must have fresh horses, especially as by the trail he would guide it there would be no relay before reaching Outfit City.

It would be a long drive around, but the trail was fairly good, there was no hurry, and time was nothing if the California coach flanked the road agents in safety.

The scout wanted a fresh mount himself, and not having had anything to eat since leaving Outfit City, he decided to have supper at Lone Sam's cabin and not have to halt to cook his own meal on the road.

He was anxious to get the California coach as far away from danger by dawn as he could.

If the mounted sports found the coach did not come, they would wait for some hours to give it time, and then go to look it up.

Then they would see the trail where it had branched off, and knowing the country as they did, they would feel that it would reach Outfit City, with the start it had, before they could overtake it, while, to head it off the way it had taken they would have to go right through the headquarters camp and meet it.

With a few hours' start then, by brisk driving, Buffalo Bill felt that he could lead the Californians safely into Outfit City, and from there on it could be out of danger of the mounted Sports.

So he had his supper, got a fresh horse, and a good one, and then began to grow anxious as the coach did not appear.

At last he decided to ride on and meet it.

He was anxious to find out what the matter was, and so bidding Lone Sam good-night, but saying nothing of the extra coach, he mounted his horse and rode on his way.

In a few miles he came to where the trail turned off, where he intended to guide the coach.

This was at a meeting place of two trails, and the scout, on arriving there and looking over the ground, decided that the California coach had not reached there yet.

After scouting around carefully in all directions Buffalo Bill found a hiding place behind a pile of rocks and sheltered by overhanging bushes and scrub trees, where he and his horse could be entirely concealed from any one passing either way on either of the trails.

"Here I'll wait," said Buffalo Bill, "till the California coach comes in sight, and then I'll scout it the rest of the way."

He did not have to wait long, for within half an hour he heard a clattering of horses hoofs on the trail, and the lights of the coach shone through the darkness.

The driver pulled his horses back on their haunches when Buffalo Bill appeared out of the darkness and was considerably relieved to find out who it was who confronted him.

To the astonishment of the scout the coach was empty, but the driver soon explained a portion at least, of the mysterious adventures of the night to the scout.

Mr. Insley, the Californian who had hired the special coach, had taken sick at a point some distance back on the road and was so ill that he had been unable to continue the journey.

His daughter, Lola Insley, who had been brought up on a ranch and who was a daring rider and a sure shot had volunteered to go ahead herself with the money and jewels and carry them to Outfit City.

Her father had at first objected, but had finally consented, trusting that her experience of ranch life and daring would carry her through. Besides he had been afraid to keep a large sum of money with him in an unprotected line in a frontier town.

In order to still further puzzle the outlaws she had not gone on the coach which had been hired specially by her father, but had gone ahead on the regular coach.

It was she whom Buffalo Bill had met on Nebraska Ned's coach. She had left the California coach some distance behind, mounted on horseback and boarded the regular coach at the cabin of Lone Sam, as Lone Sam had explained to Buffalo Bill himself. And it was her jewels and money that Buffalo Bill had received and now had in his charge.

"Well," exclaimed Buffalo Bill after the whole story became clear to his mind, "that settles my work for this night; all I have to do now is to get these jewels to a place of safety and then to get out an expedition after these outlaws.

"The young lady is in safety by this time, and I can answer for the money and jewels myself, so it seems that Captain Coolhand has been foiled."

Buffalo Bill did get after the outlaws a little later, and cleaned out the band, rescuing the young men whom they had captured.

When he got back to the fort, however, he heard news that startled him. In next week's issue a full account of his further adventures with Captain Coolhand's queer band—one of whom was a negro and another a Chinaman—will be told.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 84, will contain "Buffalo Bill and the Scout Miner; or, The Mounted Sharps of the Overland."

How Buffalo Bill saved the Giant Miner, a strange frontier character, from the horrors of an insane asylum, will be told in this issue.

The outlaws, under Captain Coolhand, did finally succeed in capturing that brave girl, Lola Insley, as well as her father. They got no money, however, as Buffalo Bill, as has been shown in the previous story, took care of that. The great scout, single handed, started after the mounted Sharps and finally wiped out the band.

CURIOUS DREAMS



No contest has ever excited so much enthusiasm as this.
The letters are simply pouring in.
We are proud of our boys. Let every one write.
The prizes are splendid.
For full particulars, see page

My Long Dream.

(By Raymond Lynch, Pueblo, Col.)

I had read a book of Buffalo Bill—"Fighting the Prairie Pirates"—and went to bed, when I dreamed I was a scout and was following some Indians, when a score of men galloped up behind me. They said to halt, but I tried to make my horse go, but it wouldn't. Then I got off and tried to run, and I could not do it. A big fellow come up and grabbed me and put me on the back of the captain's horse. He took me to an Indian camp, where he gave me to an Indian chief. He told an Indian squaw she could have me or he would burn me up.

She took me and gave me a buckskin shirt and pants. She got tired of me after a while and told me she would give me to the chief on the next day. But just then a troop of soldiers tried to surprise the Indians, but couldn't do it. The Indians broke camp and moved away in the mountains. The chief gave me a bow and arrow for a present. I fitted an arrow in the bow and let it loose. It went in a tree and killed an Indian. The Indians got after me and said in six days they would burn me to death. They set me to work in a field with a hoe, and I slung it away and sat down. The Indians got mad at this and hit me with clubs. They teased me so much that I hit one with a club. They then put me in a guard-house with another boy. We got in a fight with our fists and the Indians thought it so funny they took us outside to fight. I gave the boy a black eye and I never got hurt. They let me go hunting with them one day and I shot a bear and wounded it. It came after me and I couldn't run, and only for an Indian I would have been torn up. He shot it, and gave me the fur. I kept the fur so if I got free I could sell it. They locked me up again with the boy. He told me he was captured while herding cattle. I told him how I had been captured, and he said I was brave to try to run from the white ren-

egades; that they would send a bullet through me. He was a boy with a brown face that was tanned with sunshine. His clothes were like mine, and he said his father was rich and his mother was good to him. About two days after this the whites made another assault on the Indians, which put them to flight. It was then that I was set free. When I got home, my father and mother had thought I was dead, and I was welcomed by a large crowd. It was the longest dream I ever had.

An Aerial Voyage.

(By Harold A. Laven, Dayton, Ohio.)

Moored at her dock and ready for her aerial voyage was a large silk balloon swaying and straining to be off. An excited crowd had gathered to see the ascension, and I was among them, eager and ready for anything and everything. When all was ready, the aeronaut stepped out, and, after addressing the crowd, invited me, much to my surprise, to accompany him. For a moment only, I hesitated; then, with my heart in my mouth, stepped into the basket. The order was given to cast off, and away we shot, the earth dropping rapidly from us, and in less than a moment everything was but a mere speck in the distance.

We raced along at increasing speed until the earth seemed to haze passing beneath us. I now began to enjoy the novelty of the ride. On and on we flew, passing over an ever-changing landscape, until darkness fell and shut out our view; but still we bored on into the darkness.

I tried to keep awake, but drowsiness at last got the best of me and I sank into a deep sleep, from which I awoke to find the sun shining and the air intensely cold. On looking out of the wicker car I saw a sight that thrilled me. There was ice, mountains of it, piled up in all its frigid grandeur. For some minutes I stood gaz-

ing at this scene rapidly fading past beneath, when I thought of home. My heart sank. I pictured myself frozen to death on the bleak tops of those icy mountains, or starved to death in that land, cold and dreary.

While musing thus, I grasped a dangling rope, accidentally pulling the air-valve open, and out rushed the gas, letting the balloon descend. Upon seeing what I had done, I gave up all hope and closed my eyes to wait, as down, down, down, nearer and nearer we sank to destruction on the ice. My whole life came before me in that brief time and the most awful thoughts filled my brain when, crash!

I awoke to find myself on the floor and my mother standing there laughing. She said she was about to call me when I rolled out onto the floor and saved her the trouble.

Adventure With Wild Animals.

(By Al. G. Basch, New York City.)

I have had many a curious dream, but one I shall never forget. I dreamed I was walking along an unknown country. When I reached the top of a little hill I saw the dust rising and looking like a whirlwind. I could occasionally see dark objects moving in the mist, and, as I was very curious, I advanced to the objects, and, to my surprise, I saw a large panther fighting with his natural-born enemy, the grizzly bear. The ground was red with the blood of the beast, and the keen nose of wolves brought them to the battle. They soon surrounded the combatants and myself.

I did not know what to do, but luckily for me I had my pistol with me—for I had had it fixed during the day. I emptied its contents and brought down five of the wolves, for I took steady aim. The greedy animals gathered around their dead companions and began to devour them. I now saw my chance, so I took out my pocketknife and ran it into the back of the panther. Another vigorous thrust and the panther was stone dead. Then the bear saw what I had done for him, and he allowed me to mount him and we were soon out of the reach of the wolves. When I awoke I had a stick in my hand and was sitting on my dog's back.

Hallucinations of a Tired Brain.

(By E. A. Field, Bath, Me.)

Once upon a time, before I was as wise as I am now, I was arrested for telling big stories. Of course, there was truth in them, for who could make up such big lies as those? It would take more than one head, and I am not such a monstrosity as that. Well, I was locked up for a month, but I told stories just the same and it helped to pass the time away, while I could not be about any other business. One day a lovely lady came in to see me, and she wanted to change the light in the room, so she stood up in the window and pulled different colored curtains up and down for a while, and then she talked to me so kindly. I will never forget her. After a while a gentleman came in. I had heard about him and often thought I would like to see him, but I did not care to see him there. Well, the next morning, before I awoke in my narrow bed, which, by the way, was close by an open

window, I dreamed that the colors ever in my mind were host to descend, and then, suddenly and then, their mouths troubles were guard and down toward them. They were very backs upon me, not as they came, departed like me, colors faded and ening, but the spirit, although I was stuned to murder me, they were planning me to protect me from story of a wonderful lovely lady who called were friends to me and those large stories involved much attention that the governor me about it (and I highly prize matter is noticed and remembered, turned about that those who would not stories, wished they had left me to number any not the end of the dream, and if you are word to the governor and I will endeavor to and continuation of the affair.

We propose to make this **DID PRIZE OFFER** **PHIC OUTFITS** complete outfit for taking,

Moral—Always listen with patience to other people's stories when they do not harm you.

A Terrible Fall.

(By James H. Huso, Grand Rapids, Mich.)

I ran out to the barn and jumped on the young mustang my father got out on the plains a week before. I started him out on the prairie, riding like the wind. I had my Winchester .22 repeating rifle and two Colt revolvers. I passed Bear creek and stopped to give him a drink. He shied at something and I fell, hitting my head against a rock, and was insensible. When I came to I could not move, and felt something cold creeping over me. I saw it was a snake, and a big one; it drew back to strike when I suddenly came to, drew, and fired twice, but missed. I felt him squeeze me and we rolled over and over on the rocks. I knew there was a deep ravine near, and struggled for life, for I knew it would kill me if I went over. I could not help it. I gave a cry of help and over we went; down, down, when, all at once, we struck, but it did not kill me, for this is only a dream and I had fallen on the floor.

"A Double Dream."

(By D. S. Burkholder, New Philadelphia, Ohio.)

About the first part of January I dreamed that in the cellar of our residence there was a large stone water-trough with an opening in one end that ran under the ground, and heard several people say that some years before a man had buried himself therein, and would rise on the 15th day of March.

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My Dangerous Trip.

(By Hymen Jacobs, Chicago, Ill.)

As I always do the banking and collecting of money for my brother, the night after I carried a large sum of money I dreamt a curious dream. Here is the dream: While going home one night with a large sum of money I saw a man following me. Something in his face and movements made me suspicious, for I clutched the money in my pocket and resolved to die before he would get it. I was almost running and was near home when he clutched me by the collar, threw me on the ground and began searching. I screamed, and awoke, and was very glad to know that it was only a dream.

"A Blow for Independence."

(By Harry Curlette, New York City.)

It was in the latter part of the month of June, 1776. I left the house in which I lived and proceeded to walk leisurely along, when I came to Faneuil Hall, while up the street could be seen an automobile containing five people, each having a hammer and a saw. Behind them could be seen another automobile containing a pile of decorations. They stopped in front of the hall.

I followed them stealthily, and curious to know what they were doing, I went to the rear of the building and opened the door and entered. After looking around, I was startled to see a large serpent, fifty feet long and having thirteen heads. The serpent crawled toward me and I tried to open the door, but it refused to open.

I stood at bay, and drew my sword (it was a war relic), and struck the serpent. The only harm I did was to break my sword over its back. As I struck, the serpent seemed to hiss: "Who are you that strikes a blow for independence? Don't you know you are hitting the thirteen

colonies of America? You shall die the death of a traitor."

I listened to the hissing of the serpent, and fear overtook me, for I did not wish to die yet; and, acting on the impulse of the moment, I seized a battle-ax which was hanging on the wall near the picture of Admiral Dewey, and swung it around my head. The ax flew off the handle and hit the electric arc light on the other side of the room. I next hit the handle against the door and—I found myself lying on the floor instead of in the bed. The clock struck four, and I went to the little closet in the corner of the room to see if the sword was really broken. I found it whole, and it was a great relief to me. But I was very glad to know it was only a dream, for the terrible serpent frightened me.

My Nightmare.

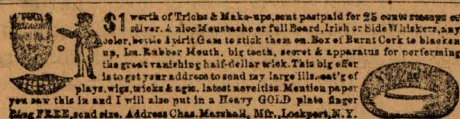
(By Francis Little, Gallipolis, Ohio.)

I had just returned from the barn, after a hard day's work. I sat down to the table, and after eating a hearty meal, satisfied my appetite by adding two large pieces of mince pie to it. After reading the paper, I went to bed, and dreamed the dream I am about to relate.

I was walking in the woods with my new "Winchester" on my shoulder. As I was about to enter a thicket, I heard a low growl, and, looking up, I saw a large bear¹ apparently watching me. I raised my rifle and took aim at his head; but, as I was nervous, the bullet hit the bear in the jaw. The enraged beast made at me, and as there was a deep ravine behind me and a high cliff at my left side, and the bear in front, I had no way of escape. The brute was making steadily at me, and, raising my rifle, I began puncturing his hide with leaden missiles.

To my astonishment, the bullets seemed not to take effect. After discharging my gun, I drew my knife, and prepared to have a hand-to-hand fight with him. The bear caught me in his jaws just as I plunged the knife up to the handle in his breast. With a deep, savage growl, he brought his forepaws together with a death-grip, and hugged me until I could not get my breath. All this time he had been standing erect, but now he began to heave to and fro, and all at once he fell over on his side, and together we rolled down the cliff toward the deep ravine. I was on top of the bear part of the time, and then, the bear was on top of me. On we rolled until we got to the brink of the precipice, and over we went, down, down—I could feel the air whistling past me. With sharp pains, and a dull thud, I alighted at the bottom, with the bear on top of me; his weight seemed to surpass anything. Just then I awoke, to find myself on the floor with my nose bleeding freely and a large cut over my eye. Instead of the bear on top of me, 'twas the pillow which I had pulled down in my struggles.

I had a hard time at school next day, as all the boys wanted to know who hit me in the nose. I am sure I want no more such exciting nightmares.



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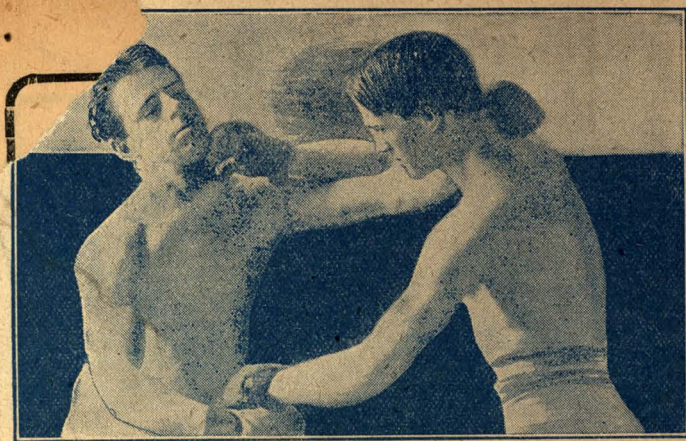
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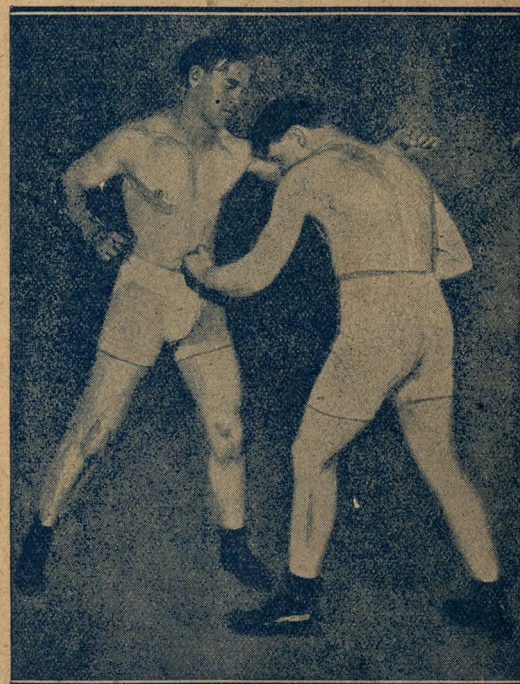
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